WHAT IS MUSIC?

BY

H. HEATHCOTE STATHAM

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WHAT IS MUSIC?

A BRIEF ANALYSIS FOR THE GENERAL READER

BY H. HEATHCOTE STATHAM

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

AUTHOR OF "MY THOUGHTS ON MUSIC AND MUSICIANS," "THE ORGAN AND ITS PLACE IN MUSICAL ART," ETC. ETC.

"His volant touch,
Instinct through all proportions, low and high,
Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue."

MILTON.

"L'idée musicale est constituée au moyen d'éléments sonores, fournis par *l'imagination*, choisis par le *cœur*, mis en ordre par *l'intelligence*."

VINCENT D'INDY.

"O what is this that knows the road I came?"

ROSSETTI.

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
NEW YORK
JAMES POTT & COMPANY

With a Frontispiece

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PREFACE

The object of this little book is to give a general idea as to the materials of which music is composed, and the manner in which they came into being, in terms which will be intelligible to those who have not leisure or inclination to study dry technical treatises on music. I believe there are many persons who have both an ear and a feeling for music, and hear it with real enjoyment, who have only the most vague idea as to what are the materials of which it is constructed; how they took their present form; why one composition is in a major key and another in a minor key, and what is the essential difference between the two; and so on. The characteristics of the most important forms of musical composition are briefly explained as we come to them in the course of the subject. What is attempted in the earlier pages is to explain in what the materials of modern

music really consist. Perhaps one of the most wonderful things about music lies in the very fact that such an appeal to our souls can be made out of a system of sounds which has been developed in such a strange and almost fortuitous manner.

H. H. S.

WIMBLEDON,
August 1913.

ERRATUM

Page 136, *line* 7–8 : delete the words "solitary and," as the contra-fagotto is also used in the Finale of the C minor Symphony, though only to add to the general body of sound ; not, as in the *Alla Marcia* of the Ninth Symphony, to produce a special effect.

What is Music?

WHAT IS MUSIC?

When Pythagoras, some 2500 years ago, observed that if a stretched string of a measured length gave out, when struck, a certain musical sound, a string of half that length gave a sound which had very close musical relation with the first one, he unconsciously laid the foundations of an art of which he and his compeers had no conception, but which was to blossom into marvellous and soul-stirring results some twenty centuries later in the world's history. For whatever Music was or meant to the Greeks (a point on which we have but vague and partial knowledge), it is quite certain that it was no art such as that which fills our concert-rooms and makes our hearts burn within us to-day. And yet modern music owes a deep

debt to the ancient Greeks, for they were, as far as we know, the first to perceive that musical sounds were capable of definite measurement and proportion, and could be arranged in a definite arithmetical relation to one another; and proceeding to arrange them in such relation, they evolved a series of sounds which forms the basis of, and is very nearly identical with, our modern musical scale.

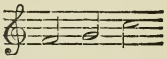
And what is the musical scale? Music, apart from its relation to words, is a symbolism expressed in sounds. But it is impossible for us to make use of sounds as a medium of design and expression until we have selected, from all possible musical sounds, some which have a definite proportional relation to one another, such as can be easily distinguished by the ear. The special quality of musical sounds, that which differentiates them from mere noises, is that they are produced by vibrations of a fixed and continuous rate of repetition—equal numbers in equal times. Now if

we take the note as 256 vibrations per second, which is about the normal pitch, then the next note in the scale, , will have 288 vibrations in the same period.[1] But what becomes of the thirty-one possible sounds between these two? The answer is that they are all in being, and (with an instrument to measure vibrations) could all be produced, but our ears are not fine enough to distinguish them. A good ear can appreciate an interval of an eighth of a tone (*i.e.* an eighth of the difference between and), but that even this is not always easy is obvious from the fact that it is not uncommon to hear a singer as much out of tune as that, without being

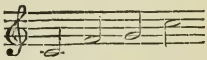
[1] The actual pitch adopted for the musical scale has varied from time to time; there is at present some uncertainty and diversity about it in the practice of different countries. The general tendency has been continually to raise it slightly, though there was a reaction against this some fifty years ago, which led to an authoritative settlement of the pitch in France, but not in England, where it still rests mainly on custom. But whatever the actual pitch adopted, the relative proportion of vibrations between any two sounds in the scale remains the same.

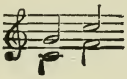
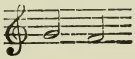
aware of it. In order therefore to deal with music as a form of design, we have to ignore the majority of possible sounds, and select a series having, as already observed, some definite proportional relation to one another, and at such a distance from each other, in numerical value of vibrations, that our ears can easily distinguish them. This selected series of notes forms the "scale"—literally a "ladder" (*scala*) of sounds, which constitutes the raw material of musical composition, and is to music, we may say, what the alphabet is to literature.

It is often supposed that the series of sounds forming the major scale, so popularly familiar in the sounds of a peal of eight bells, is something inherent in nature; but this is a mistaken idea. It seems natural to us from habit and association (perhaps even to some extent from an inherited instinct), but it is really an artificial combination, though partly based on scientific fact. Three notes in our

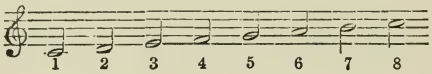
modern scale rest on scientific law; the remainder is a matter of arrangement. The three notes scientifically derived are the fourth, fifth, and octave (or eighth) from the starting point. If we take as the starting note, they are  ; and they are fixed by the arithmetical proportion of the vibrations. The octave sound, as already mentioned, was found by Pythagoras to be produced by a string half the length of the original string; their respective vibrations are as 1 to 2 in equal times; and this octave sound, in this simple arithmetical relation to the lower sound, has a remarkable similarity of effect with it; so that if a singer with a tenor voice sings a certain group of notes in his natural voice, a soprano singer reproducing the passage, in her natural voice, an octave higher, would produce the same impression on the hearer. Thus, however we may extend our scale, at the end of each series of eight notes we come on a

sound which has a remarkable affinity with that which is an octave below or above it, and impresses us as being in a sense the same sound; and our modern extended scale is thus divided up into successive sections of eight notes, of which the upper one affects the ear as being a repetition of the lower one. The immense importance of this fact, in modern music, we shall see just now. The next step in the Pythagorean investigation was to divide the string into three equal parts, and take the sound given by two-thirds of its length; this, taken with the original sound, produces the interval which we now call the *Fifth*, as it is the note which makes the fifth upwards in the modern scale; and this is the next most consonant combination after the octave, the respective vibrations being as 2 to 3. But having obtained a fifth from the lower sound of the octave, it was easy to get another fifth downward from

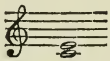
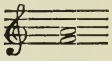
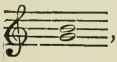
the upper sound, , a note two vibrations of which are as three of the upper sound; and thus we have now these sounds of the scale  arrived at by Pythagoras by measurement of the sounding string (he probably had no means of measuring the actual vibrations); and there they have remained ever since.

There the strict scientific basis of our scale ends. How was this skeleton to be filled up? It was a matter of mere choice. Looking again at the two fifths,  it will be seen that the upper note of the one and the lower note of the other,  , make a new interval, which we now call a whole tone. The Greeks chose that for us; they took it as a suggestion for dividing up the rest of the scale into a series of intervals of the same amount. They might have

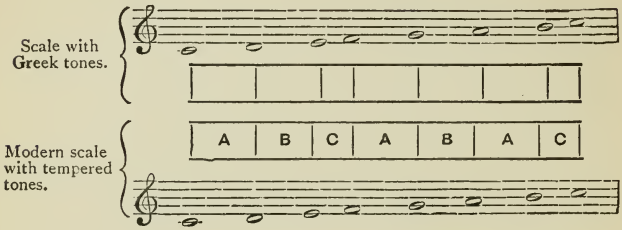
chosen other and more numerous intervals, but they chose that; and through the medium of what are called the Church "modes," the scales of early church music, which were founded on the Greek scale, it has drifted down into modern times as the main principle of division of the scale. But it has had to be slightly modified for the modern art of music. If we apply the Greek tone to our scale of C

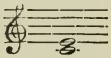


it comes out this way: 1, 4, 5, and 8 are fixed as already described; the intervals 1–2, 2–3, 5–6, and 6–7 are made equal to 4–5; but that leaves between 3–4 and 7–8 only a very small interval, less than our modern semitone. This would not matter so much when notes were only used singly, in melodic form; but when, with the dawn of modern music, it was discovered that consonant sounds—those

with the simpler arithmetical proportions of vibration—could be used in the conjunction which is called "harmony," there arose a difficulty. The interval of a *third*, between 1–3 and 5–7, in which the vibrations, to produce consonance, ought to bear the proportion of 4 to 5, was too large, and produced a dissonance. To avoid this dissonance, the tone-intervals 2–3 and 5–6 are slightly reduced, so that we have what may be called major and minor tones in the scale, and this enables us to get consonant thirds between 1–3  4–6  , and 5–7  , each of these harmonised thirds consisting of a major and a minor tone, with the vibrations of the two notes as 4 to 5, which would not be the case if the third were formed out of two major tones. The difference between the scale as it would be with the Greek tone, and the modern scale with the modified tones (taking "modern" as anything after the

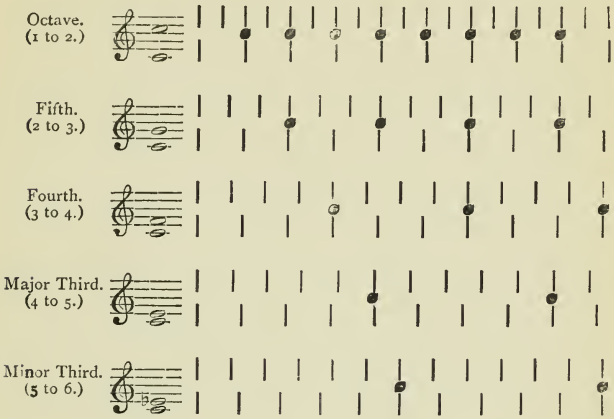
thirteenth century), may be illustrated to the eye thus :



Thus the modern scale contains three major tones (A), two minor tones (B), and two semitones (C). And it seems certain that this modification of the Greek tone arose entirely from the requirements of harmonised music. The difference between the major and minor tone, heard in succession, melodically, is so slight that only a very sensitive ear could perceive it ; but the difference in the harmonised effect, when the two notes  are sounded together, would be apparent even to a comparatively untrained ear.

The greater or less consonance between any two musical sounds, it should be here

explained, depends on the more or less simple arithmetical proportion of their rates of vibration. This also can be represented to the eye, the two rows of perpendicular strokes representing the proportionate vibrations of the upper and lower notes in each case :

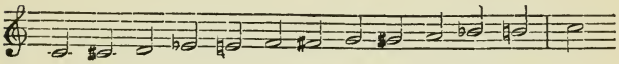


It will be seen that in the octave, which is the most perfect consonance, the vibrations are in the simplest ratio, 1 to 2, every alternate beat of the upper note coinciding with one of the lower. Each coincidence of a vibration between the two notes pro-

duces a slight reinforcement of the sound (indicated by the dots between the vibration marks), which occurs at longer intervals as the proportions become less simple, but is still too rapid to be noticeable by the ear, except in notes very low in pitch, where the vibrations are slower. With closer intervals than these, or when one of the two notes is "out of tune," the points of coincidence of vibrations in the upper and lower notes occur so far apart that they can be distinguished by the ear as separate waves or "beats" in the sound. One of the notes has then to be raised or lowered in pitch till these audible beats are eliminated, by the restoration of the simpler proportions in rate of vibration.

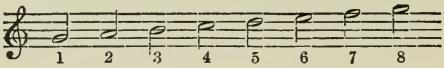
To return to our musical scale; the reader will recognise, from what has been said above, that this scale or ladder of musical sounds, though partly based on scientific conditions, is, as a whole, a compromise—a scale artificially arranged to make the best of a difficult problem, in

which considerations of melodic progression and harmonised combinations of sound rather clash with each other. But these notes of the normal scale do not represent all the sounds we use; what of the "chromatic scale," as it is conventionally called, the scale of semitones, which gives us twelve notes in the octave?

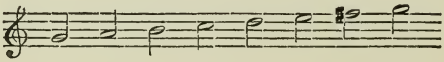


Whence does that arise? We have seen how our extended scale is divided into successive groups of eight notes, included between and governed by the lowest note and its octave. That recurring octave note forms the "key-note" of the scale, and hence we get the idea of *key*, of which the Greeks knew nothing. And it is evident that, by way of getting variety of tone, we may form another similar scale or succession of sounds, starting from some other note than C, provided that we can modify one or more of the notes so as to

get the semitones, in the new scale, in the same relative position as in the old one. If, for instance, we start a scale from G

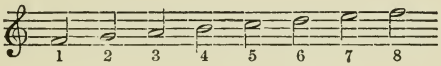


the first semitone, between 3 and 4, is in the right position, for these are only the upper four notes of the scale of C repeated. But between 7 and 8, where the other semitone should fall (see the diagram on p. 10), there is a whole tone, the semitone falling between 6 and 7; so we must raise number 7, the note , half a tone higher, by putting a sign before it and calling it "F sharp," when we get a scale in the normal form starting from G:

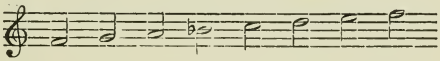


Observe that F sharp has not in reality anything whatever to do with F; it is only a device to simplify musical notation by avoiding the invention of another

written note. A similar process has to be adopted whatever note we select as a key-note to start from; some notes must be modified by signs so as to get the semitones in the same relative position. If we start from F as a key-note



we find the upper semitone in its right place, because the upper four notes are only the lower notes of our old scale of C repeated an octave higher; but between 3 and 4, where there should be a semitone, there is a whole tone, so we have to lower 4 a semitone by the sign which makes it "B flat," and we get our scale of F:



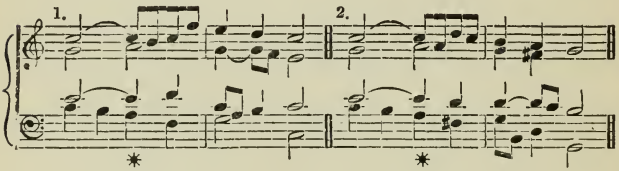
The same process has to be applied whatever note we adopt as the keynote, the number of flat or sharp marks added depending on the number of notes which have to be modified to obtain, in the adopted key, the normal position of tones and

semitones in the scale. To prevent the unsightliness of repeatedly introduced sharps or flats, those which are permanently required are marked at the commencement of each line of the music, and form what is called the "signature" of the key. If this be thought too simple a matter for explanation, it is only necessary to reply that there are numbers of amateurs (ladies especially) who can play fairly well, and seem really to love music, who cannot tell you, from the signature of a composition, what key it is in.

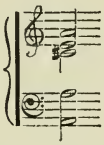
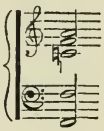
The reader may now be in a position to appreciate the immense importance to music of that division of the scale into successive groups of notes each governed by the keynote and its octave, before referred to. For as we can reproduce this grouping in reference to any keynote we like to select, that gives us the sense of difference of key and its different effect on the ear, and opens the way to the process classified by the (to many) mysterious

word "modulation"; a word often read, probably, without any clear idea of its meaning. "Modulation" means the passing, in an artistic and effective manner, from one key to another in the course of a composition; and the power to do this is part of the very life-blood of musical composition. A long composition all in one key, however fine in its conception and detail, could hardly escape a certain monotony of effect; modulation gives the power of varying the tonality and keeping up the interest of the listener by what may be called an unexpected excursion into a new region of sounds. In this change, and in its effect on the hearer, there is something analogous to the effect of changes of colour as affecting the eye, and it was no doubt from a dim perception of this that the scale of twelve semitones in the octave (see page 13) came to be called the "chromatic" scale, as containing the materials which supply change of colour in the music. The most simple, and perhaps one might

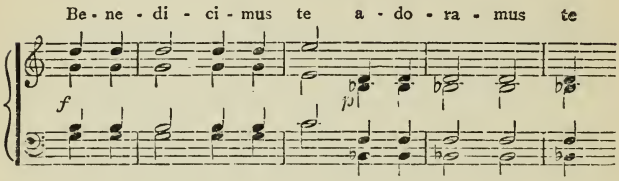
say the most orthodox form of modulation, consists in making a new departure from a harmony which is common both to the key that is abandoned and the one that is entered on. Thus, in the two following passages:



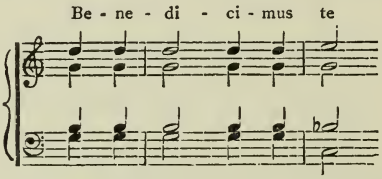
No. 1 is in the key of C major; No. 2 begins in the same key but modulates into the key of G, the harmony being the same in each case up to the chord marked with an asterisk, which is common to both keys. This is a very simple example; but even in the more elaborate and subtle modulations often found in modern music the principle remains the same; a turning-point is made by means of a harmony which is related both to what precedes and what

follows it. With Beethoven, and since his time, it is not uncommon, for the sake of a special effect, to pass suddenly from one key to another, without any linking, but only under conditions which render the change agreeable and not harsh to the ear. Thus, the drop to a key a major third lower, from  to  , is a common device with Beethoven, and is even sometimes employed by Mozart (see the slow movement of his Pianoforte Sonata in C minor), and is always effective; but even here there is one note common to both harmonies, though they belong to keys far apart in other senses. A remarkable instance of a sudden change of key, without any modulation, for the sake of special expression, occurs in the *Gloria* of Beethoven's Mass in C, where, in order to give the expression of abasement and

solemnity to the words "adoramus te," he drops suddenly to a key a tone lower:

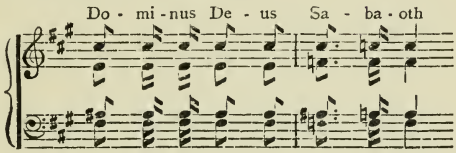


In this case, however, the change is to a key which has a certain relation to the preceding one; for though B flat is not part of the scale of C, it is closely related to the key of C, forming in fact what is called the "dominant seventh" to C, and it would have been a quite natural and unforced progression to have written

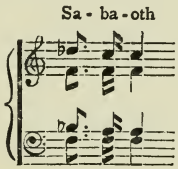


so that the change is not so violent as at first sight it appears. The same Mass affords an example of what is called by the not very intelligible term "enharmonic modu-

lation," which consists in changing the name of a note, either on paper or by implication, so as to give it a new theoretic relation to the accompanying notes. This is the passage as written:



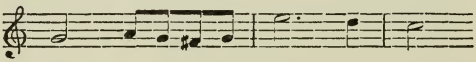
The transition at "Sabaoth" looks bewildering on paper, but it is quite simple if we realise that at the commencement of that bar the in the treble and the in the tenor part are to be regarded as having become respectively and so that the passage is really



which is a perfectly natural and common progression, only remarkable in its effect

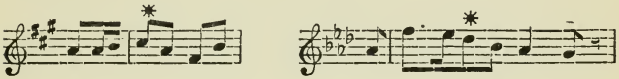
on the ear from the subtle manner in which it is led up to.

Reverting for a moment to the chromatic scale, and the use of introduced flats and sharps ("accidentals," as they are called) in the course of a composition, it should be borne in mind that the introduction of such signs is not always made with the view of leading in a modulation; they may be and often are introduced purely for melodic effect. For instance, this passage



is in the key of C, in spite of the F sharp, which is only introduced to give a more delicate effect to the phrase in which it occurs. Whether an accidental sharp or flat really means a modulation, or whether it is a piece of melodic effect only, depends on the context in which it is used, and on what follows it; and those who wish to play music with the understanding and not merely by rote must learn to distin-

guish between the two cases. Another point to be mentioned in regard to notes marked sharp or flat is, that the fixed notes of the pianoforte (the most popularised musical instrument) do not always represent the precise value intended in the musical notation. For instance, on its keyboard C sharp and D flat are represented by the same key, but no accomplished violinist, in playing these two phrases

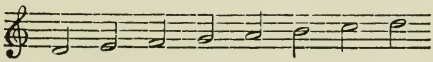


would play the two notes with an asterisk exactly the same. As the modern scale is in itself a compromise, so the pianoforte keyboard is, so to speak, a compromise within a compromise. It represents the best that we can do with a fixed keyboard, and the pianoforte (as we shall have to recognise later) is a most beautiful and versatile instrument; but it is not perfect and cannot practically be made so.

Attempts have been made occasionally to supply a keyboard with additional keys to represent perfect instead of imperfect intervals. This was done originally on the Temple Church organ, where there were double black keys for G sharp and A flat, and for C sharp and D flat, but it seems to have been found so inconvenient in actual use that it has been done away with in the modern revision of the instrument. Could the difficulty have been foreseen from the first, it might have been possible to devise a keyboard which would have furnished these perfect intervals with less inconvenience to the player; but all the pianoforte and organ music in existence has been written for the present form of keyboard and with the contemplation of a fingering suited to that arrangement of the keys, and to alter it now would mean a radical alteration of the whole mechanism of playing, and would render many existing passages absolutely unplayable.

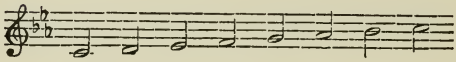
Reference has been made, in passing, to

the "major key," and the difference between that and the minor key must be explained. A minor key is one in which the third note of the scale is flattened by a semitone; so that in the key of C, for instance, instead of the interval of a third standing as , with the vibrations of the two notes as 4 to 5, it would stand thus , with vibrations as 5 to 6. In the old church modes, which preceded the modern classification of keys, and were founded on the Greek scale, the minor third was inherent in some of the scales; the scale of the Doric mode, for instance, is

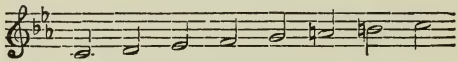


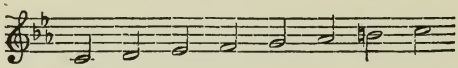
with a minor third between the first and the third note. But after the modern system of keys had been developed, the adoption of a minor key for any composition was merely a matter of choice, for the sake of special effect and expression. Strictly speaking, the minor scale has the

sixth and seventh notes flattened also, so that the scale of C minor would stand thus:



the "signature" of the key being three flats; but for technical reasons connected both with melody and harmony (which need not be gone into in this small treatise), the sixth and seventh, the latter especially, are not always treated as flat. The key of C minor, if put in the form of a scale, might take also either of these two forms





and it would still be recognised as the scale of C minor. But the important element, in a harmonised composition, is the flat third, or minor third; it is that which mainly gives its special character to the minor key as distinguished from the major; and that it should be used for some com-

positions and not for others is simply a question of expression and of the mood of the composer. In compositions on a grand scale the effect of the minor key, as compared with the major, is loaded, gloomy, sometimes almost defiant ; in slighter compositions its effect is in general plaintive and melancholy.[1] There is perhaps no such remarkable example of the contrast of effect between the minor and major of the same key as that furnished in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, where, after employing the minor key for the restless and

[1] This seems not to have been always the feeling, however, of the old composers. Purcell chose a minor key for the chorus :

> "In these delightful pleasant groves
> Let us celebrate our happy loves ;"

and some of the old English madrigals to very cheerful words are in a minor key. It seems with them to have been more a matter of musical colouring. Handel is fond of using a minor key for triumphal choruses supposed to be sung by bad people, as in the Philistines' chorus in *Samson*, "Great Dagon hath subdued our foe," giving a kind of sinister quality to the jubilation. Sterndale Bennett has made a very piquant use of the minor key in his charming little pianoforte composition, "Pas triste, pas gai," which exactly answers to its title ; you can hardly tell whether to regard it as cheerful or melancholy.

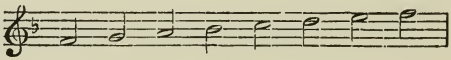
fateful first movement and for the mystic wanderings of the third movement, he leads, by a *crescendo* on a harmony which might belong to either key, into the grand burst into the major key for the triumphal march at the close, with the effect of the hall having been suddenly filled with a blaze of light.

It is rather a curious point to note that the older composers, down to the time of Bach, and in general Bach himself, did not like to close a composition in a minor key with the minor chord, because the minor third is a less consonant interval than the major third, and they thought that one should end with the more consonant chord; consequently nearly all the compositions of that period that are in a minor key end with a chord with the major third suddenly introduced. But Bach, who was an innovator in everything, did not always accept this practice, and five out of his organ fugues in a minor key end frankly with the minor chord, the composer having

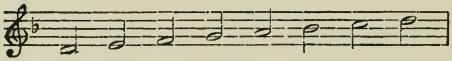
evidently felt that the introduction of the major chord at the close would interfere with the general character of the composition. In the "Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues" for the pianoforte, two or three of the compositions (the very expressive little fugue in G sharp minor, for instance) close with the minor chord; and he sometimes evades the dilemma altogether by ending a fugue in a minor key with only the bare keynote in the bass and treble, and no harmony at all.

The "signature" of any minor key, it should be observed, is always the same as that of the major key that is seated a minor third higher; thus the signature of C minor is , the same as E flat major; the signature of D minor is , the same as F major. Or, to put it another way, every major key has its "relative minor," with the same signature, but seated a minor third lower. Looking at it in this way, we might say that every minor key is

derived from its relative major key, by taking the same scale of notes from a different starting-point. For instance, we have

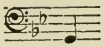


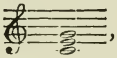
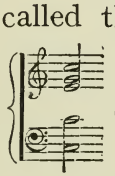
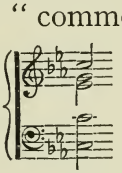
Scale of F major.



Scale of D minor.

To know which of two keys a piece is in, whether minor, or major with the same signature, it is necessary to look not only at the signature but at the opening harmonies, and especially the position of the bass. This, again, might be thought too simple to need explanation ; but it is not. A violoncellist who played in an amateur orchestra told me one day they had been practising a symphony of Mozart's in B flat, and handed me his part to see if I knew the work. It turned out to be "Mozart in G minor," commencing with

the persistent  in his own bass part.

Though the practice of inserting a major chord at the end of a composition in a minor key has been long abandoned (unless it may be sometimes deliberately used with a special object), throughout the whole period of musical development it has been assumed that the final chord of a composition, major or minor, must be the triad of notes, consisting of keynote, third, and fifth  , which constitutes what is called the "common chord" of the key,  or  supposing the key to be C major or minor, and similarly of course for all other keys, the keynote always forming the bass. The reason is that this is the most consonant and harmonious combination of notes in a chord; a "chord" being any combination of three or more notes (two notes sounded to-

gether do not constitute a chord, only a consonance or dissonance). It has therefore always been regarded as the only one on which the ear can rest with satisfaction as the final complex of sounds; moreover it defines and, as it were, clenches the prevalent key at the last moment. Some modern theorists have suggested that this, like other practices in music once *de rigueur* and now abandoned, is only another piece of conservatism, and that there is no reason why a composer should not, if it suited his mood, or for purposes of expression, end a composition with a discord; and in fact Debussy and other modern composers have occasionally done so. But though this may pass in compositions of a slight and fanciful character, it is not likely that the world will accept it in the case of important compositions on a large scale. The physical ear counts for something, after all. Even Wagner, who cared less for precedent than most people, though for

purposes of expression he allowed the chorus in *Lohengrin* to utter their final notes in a discord—a kind of wail of anguish, employed the band in the few bars of closing symphony to wheel round into the common chord of the key, and close in the orthodox manner. *Sunt certi denique fines.*

We have seen that the sounds in which musical design is expressed were defined in the first instance by reducing them to arithmetical proportion; and it should be clearly realised that music is entirely an artificially constructed art, and that what poets have sometimes called "the music of nature" has no more to do with the art of music than trees have to do (as used to be imagined) with Gothic arcades and vaulting. Music is proportion and extension in Time, as architecture is proportion and extension in Space. It was with a perception of this that Milton, in his wonderful little poem, "At a solemn music," drew that remarkable parallel,

embodied in a single word, between moral and material discord :

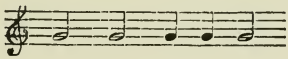
> "That we on earth, with undiscording voice,
> May rightly answer that melodious noise;
> As once we did, till *disproportioned* sin
> Jarred against nature's chime" &c.—

sin being something which, like a false note in music, was out of harmony with the true order of God's world ; one of the most pregnant expressions ever suggested to a poet in connection with music. It is true that we occasionally use terms of space in regard to music, speaking of notes as "high" or "low," but that is a mere figure of speech which we have got into the habit of using, and which arises probably from the fact that in written music the treble notes are written on the upper part of the stave ; just as we have got into the habit of speaking of a place as being "up in the north," because our maps are commonly drawn with the north at the top of the page. There is in fact no "high" or "low" in music ; it is con-

venient to use the words, but the treble notes might just as well have been written at the bottom of the stave and the bass ones at the top, had the practice of writing music commenced in that way.

But between extension in space and extension in time there is one most important difference of condition, which affects the whole scope of the art of music, and our mental attitude in regard to it. If there were some idea expressed by these marks:

two longs, two shorts, and a long, no doubt we should feel that the same idea was expressed if we heard these notes sounded:



But the important difference is that in the first case we can see the symbol as a whole, and it remains there for inspection; in the second case we can only hear each portion of it separately, and it is gone as soon as sounded. So it is with an elaborate

piece of music; it has (or should have) a distinct design and proportion running through it, but our perception of this, at any moment of the performance, is entirely dependent on our recollection of what has preceded it. A man who had a good ear for music, but was entirely devoid of the faculty of memory, could never enjoy or appreciate any musical composition, as he would only hear the sound of the moment, and could not connect it in his mind with the whole design of the composition.

All important compositions, of course, are written out in musical notation, and can thus be studied and analysed at leisure by those who are able to realise, in the ear of the mind (so to speak), the effects represented by the notation. To be able to do this, however, is to be an accomplished musician; few amateurs can hope to acquire more than the power to form a general idea of the style and character of a composition from the study of

the written notes. But the faculty of being able to represent sounds, their pitch and duration, by written signs, is vital to the art of music; without it there could never, in fact, have been any art of music worth speaking of; and the modern system of notation, considering that it grew up and developed spontaneously and not according to any deliberately planned scheme, is one of the most remarkable things connected with music. It has been foolishly criticised sometimes as presenting unnecessary difficulties to the learner; but no one with any natural musical ability ever found any difficulty in learning it, and the others might as well let it alone. It has the immense advantage of presenting a picture to the eye of the sounds intended for the ear; their difference of pitch, their duration, their harmonic combinations, are pictorially represented,[1] and can be taken in at a glance.

[1] In this respect how different from the wretched "Tonic Sol-fa" system, as it is called, devised apparently to enable country choirs with limited musical ability to learn part-

It is difficult to imagine any deliberately devised system which could combine so many merits; and the man who wants to invent a new system of notation may be at once dismissed as a "crank." He might as well propose to translate all the literature of the world into Esperanto.

Such are the materials out of which the art of music is constructed, and the realm of sound marshalled into conditions of form and order which render it a plastic medium for the expression of feeling and imagination. And now, what is it that we have got out of it?

The broadest analysis of musical com-

singing. It is said to have been practically useful in that way, but it is useless for the complications of instrumental music, and those who have spent time in learning it only have to find that, if they want a general acquaintance with music, they have to learn the regular notation after all, after wasting their time over the other. As to the difficulty of the regular notation, the present writer, who certainly does not pretend to be a musical genius, learned it so early that he cannot even remember the time when he did not know it. It is not half as difficult as learning Greek.

positions divides them naturally and obviously into two main groups, vocal and instrumental music. Of these the latter is the younger sister; music in artistic form meets us first in the shape of harmonised compositions for voices, and one of the most important forms of instrumental music first arose, as we shall see, out of an imitation of choral music. It is, however, of instrumental music that we wish more especially to speak here, since that is the most pure and abstract form of musical symbolism, relying on its own utterances and suggestions only; while in vocal music the idea, the feeling to be expressed, may be, and in all music of the more modern period actually is, suggested by the words. For that reason it is easier to understand; there is no question left for the listener as to what the music is intended to express; he is given that; the only question left for him is—does this express well the feeling of the words, and add anything to their force? For the latter condition is a *sine*

quâ non ; unless the musical setting brings out something stronger and more incisive than the mere words convey to us, it might as well have been let alone. Of this kind of power in vocal music no more remarkable instance could be cited than Handel's air, "O ruddier than the cherry." What kind of love-song does one imagine could be sung by a grotesque savage giant? There you have it: from the ordinary point of view of a love-song, grotesque, preposterous almost, yet entirely in character, and at the same time a splendid song from the musical point of view. So again in the chorus for male voices in *Alexander's Feast:*

> "Bacchus' blessings are a treasure,
> Drinking is the soldier's pleasure,"

which has just the lilt about it that one might expect from a tavern chorus, and yet this again is splendid music. Mozart has done the same in the song in which Don Giovanni gives orders for his banquet, "Una gran' festa fà preparar"; the very

glory of licentious living is in it. This power of giving intensity of character to a song, and yet keeping it within the artistic limits proper to music, belongs only to genius of a high order, and to a healthy state of the art. Attempts have been recently made, both in vocal and instrumental music, to express unpleasant ideas or character by unpleasant music; some of these are very clever and are intellectually interesting, but they represent an essentially decadent art. The object of music is to give delight—to the ear first, and through the ear to the mind. Where it forgets or forgoes that object, it has lost its way, like the man in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, whose departure from the true path to the Celestial city "led him into a wide field, full of dark mountains, where he stumbled and fell, and rose no more."

But the saving clause used above, that in all vocal music "of the more modern period" the feeling of the music is suggested by the words, was not inserted

without a reason. For in the highest achievements of the early school of vocal music, which are represented most typically by the works of Palestrina (1528 ?–1594) and of the great English composer of the same school, Orlando Gibbons (1583–1625), we find no such attempt at character-painting arising out of the suggestion of the words. What we find is an exquisitely woven mosaic of sounds, formed by the intertwining of four, five, six or more voice parts, in the course of which a series of grave and severe melodies are successively proposed, as it were, by one voice, imitated (in strict accordance with the then accepted conditions as to harmony) by the rest, then dropped and another melody taken up and similarly imitated. Words sacred or secular seem to be regarded alike ; they strike on the ear, like the pictures of Browning's " Pictor Ignotus "—

> " With the same cold, calm, beautiful regard."

If we take Gibbons's immortal little madrigal, " The Silver Swan," we find no

distinction of style or sentiment between that and his church music; it would sound perfectly suitable if sacred words were set to it. There is not even any of the recurrent rhythm which to modern ears is one of the most marked features of music; there is no division into bars (the modern editions are only barred for convenience of performance under present conditions); the singers kept their places merely by careful observance of the marked duration of the notes—semibreve, minim, crotchet, and dotted notes (a dot after a note adding half its original length to it). What, then, did the composers of this school aim at and achieve? That which Browning has expressed (rather clumsily perhaps) in *Abt Vogler*:

> "And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
> That out of three sounds[1] he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star."

[1] In reference to the fact (already mentioned) that it requires at least three sounds to form a chord and to define a harmony.

They evolved a pure beauty of harmonised sounds on the basis of a considered design. From the first discovery that two or more melodies could, under certain conditions, be sung together with agreeable effect, that one part might be written "against" another (*contra punctum*, "note against note"—hence "counterpoint"), was developed this system of an elaborate interweaving of melodies sung by various voices, so arranged that their combined effect should be harmonious and agreeable to the ear. The mere fact that human voices, in regard to their possible compass of notes, naturally group themselves into the four divisions distinguished as Soprano, Alto, Tenor, and Bass, might in itself have first suggested their combination in the performance of a composition. In this vocal part-music of the old school there was little modulation, partly because the sense of *key*, and the power of moving with ease from one key to another, was but little developed at this period; partly also for

a reason which still holds good in the case of part-music for voices, viz. that unaccompanied voices, singing in separate parts, cannot easily keep in tune except in comparatively simple melodic progressions. Passages of modulation which can be easily accomplished by instruments, where the notes are formed by arbitrary movements of the hands into certain known positions, become hazardous for unaccompanied singers, who have to judge the intervals entirely by the ear. Thus we have in the early Italian school the perfection of style for harmonised vocal music; a succession of clear-cut melodic phrases, taken up and repeated by one voice after another, "in linked sweetness long drawn out"; a new phrase inserting itself between the interstices of the previous one, to be in its turn taken up and imitated by the other voices; the whole forming a continuous network of woven sounds—passionless, colourless (for modulation is to the ear what colour is to the eye), devoid

of any marked recurrent rhythm; a kind of symbol of eternity in musical sound.

Nothing could be more solemn, more perfectly suited to religious music, but it is somewhat devoid of mere human interest; and gradually it came to be perceived also (for we cannot put our finger on any moment of origination of the idea) that a larger and more coherent form of musical design might be attained if, instead of taking one melody after another for treatment in counterpoint—dropping No. 1 and proceeding to No. 2, and so on—one melody were selected worthy to form the principal "subject," to be continually returned to as the governing motive of the whole composition. Hence arose what is perhaps the grandest of all forms of musical composition, the "Fugue," so called from *fuga*, "flight," because the "subject" (that is the accepted name for it) seemed to fly and be chased through all the several parts or voices; as indicated by Milton, with his magnificent terseness of expres-

sion, where every word tells, in the lines quoted on the title-page. It took a century for this form to be developed to its full capabilities. What is its value in choral music is most brilliantly and triumphantly shown in the works of Handel, who combined in such a remarkable degree dramatic power with grasp of musical form, and who found the Fugue form ready to his hand as a medium for dramatic expression within the limits of a strictly defined musical form. There is nothing in music more dramatic in character than the fierce chorus in *Messiah*, "He trusted in God that he would deliver him," but it is a fugue in strict form all the same :

> "It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to law."

But it is a law larger and more comprehensive, a form more plastic and pliable, than that of the old Italian vocal school, which was hedged in by conventions arising out of only partially understood conditions ; the perception of keys and their

relationship has developed, and the recurrence of a rhythmical accent, indicated to the eye by the bar-divisions, has become a vital element in music. Then, too, there comes in the feature of instrumental accompaniment to the voices, either supporting and piloting them through passages that it would otherwise be difficult to negotiate, or forming in itself an independent design, contrasting with or, as it were, commenting on the singing of the chorus. This latter function has assumed more and more importance in modern choral music, so that in many cases the accompaniment by the band is quite as important to the total effect as the singing, and the composition would be a bare skeleton without it. And in opera, which originally consisted of singing by the actors supported by an unpretentious instrumental accompaniment, the two functions are so nearly interchanged that in Wagner's *Tristan* and *Parsifal,* and in some more recent operas, we seem rather to be listen-

ing to an instrumental composition illustrated or commented on by the singers. So far has the part of the voice in music moved from its severe and self-reliant attitude in the days when music was young, and was only feeling her way towards the possession of her kingdom.

We must content ourselves with this mere general reference to Oratorio and Opera, as the remainder of our space must be devoted to the consideration of instrumental music, which, as already observed, is the most abstract form of the art, and the most difficult to understand. But one remark may be made, before we quit the subject, with reference to a very shallow and thoughtless objection sometimes raised against choral music on a great scale. What is the use or the sense, say these objectors (and I have heard the objection persisted in with all the stolidity of ignorance), of this constant repetition of the same words through a long chorus? The answer is twofold. In the first place,

music, as defined above, is "proportion and extension in time," and time is required for its development. In the second place, the very object of setting words to music is to draw out from, perhaps, a short concentrated phrase all the meaning and significance which are latent in it. This is admirably put in Matthew Arnold's thoughtful poem, "Epilogue to Lessing's Laocoön." Mighty, he says, is the pathos of the words *Miserere Domine;* but the words are gone as soon as they are uttered.

> "Beethoven takes them then—those two
> Poor bounded words—and makes them new;
> Infinite makes them, makes them young,
> Transplants them to another tongue,
> Where they can now, without constraint,
> Pour all the soul of their complaint,
> And roll adown a channel large
> The wealth divine they have in charge.
> Page after page of music turn,
> And still they live and still they burn,
> Eternal, passion-fraught, and free—
> *Miserere Domine!*"

Is that sufficient answer?

But the great modern art is the art of

purely instrumental music, unfettered by and independent of words; "unexpressive notes," in Milton's phrase, which, just because they are unexpressive to the reason, express all the more to the fancy and the imagination. There is this glory, too, in purely instrumental music, that it can express nothing evil. In vocal music the words may be foolish, weak, even immoral; instrumental music may be weak, but it can never be immoral; it may express joy or sorrow, it is powerless to express evil. Of neither poetry nor painting can that be said; so that in this sense again instrumental music is the most ethereal of all the arts.

Instrumental music existed, in a sense, long before it became welded into the great and elaborate forms of the modern art. In those old days it was an art of melodic form only; of tunes played on simple wind instruments, of the kind which developed subsequently into such instruments as the flute, oboe, and clarinet; pipes with which

the monotony of pastoral labours was lightened—

> "From him who on the mountain lea
> By dancing rivulets fed his flocks,
> To him who sat upon the rocks
> And fluted to the morning sea";

a line which seems to bring back to us so wonderfully the old, fresh, open-air life of ancient Greece. The tunes so played would be somewhat analogous to the vocal Volkslieder, or popular songs; tunes of almost spontaneous evolution, traceable to no individual, and becoming the common property of a district; as Mr. Hichens, in his picturesque romance, *The Call of the Blood*, tells us they still are among the Sicilian peasantry. Wind-blown instruments would be of more popular use than stringed instruments, because they could give voice to a more or less sustained melody, which was not to be obtained from strings until the discovery that strings could be made to produce sustained sounds by drawing a bow over them. The harp,

or lyre (in its more ancient name), bulks largely, no doubt, in the records of antique music, and has the artistic advantage of being a very picturesque instrument in appearance, and lending itself very well to painted and sculptured representation; it has become, in the language of poets, almost typical both of music and poetry. But even the modern harp is an instrument of very restricted capabilities, from its inability to give utterance to a sustained singing melody; and the ancient lyre, with its few strings snapped with the fingers or with a *plectrum*, could hardly have produced anything which we should now dignify by the name of instrumental music. Yet, oddly enough, it was with an instrument of no greater capabilities that the first ancestor of Bach of whom anything is known gave vent to his musical aspirations. This was Veit Bach, the great-great-grandfather of Sebastian Bach, who kept a mill at Wechmar in the Thuringian forest, and used to take with him to his

mill a cithara (*cythringen*), a small instrument with steel wires which were struck with a quill, and played on it to the accompaniment of the mill machinery. "He must at all events," said his great descendant, "have learned *time* that way." It was a very small rill to have been the source of so mighty a flood of music.

But the remark that "he must have learned time that way" is suggestive in regard to the real motive underlying the popular forms of instrumental music to which we have just referred. They were the offspring of much the same feeling as that which is at the root of dancing—the impulse towards play of rhythmical movement. The Greek lyre, as we know, was frequently, perhaps generally, the accompaniment to a dance; so were the different forms of pipe. And even where the dance was not present, the motive for piping and harping was much the same; it was the active expression of the physical desire to give vent to joy or any other kind of ex-

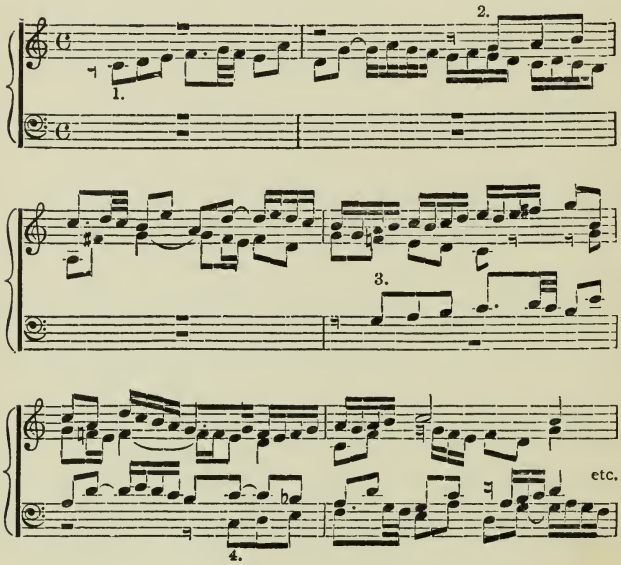
citement by rhythmical movement. But such music makes little or no appeal to the intellect ; it hardly rises to the dignity of an art ; its appeal is rather to the nervous faculties and to the sense of life and movement. It was only when these primitive materials of instrumental music were marshalled into large and comprehensive forms, based on a thoroughly considered design, that the art rose to be, as we have said, a symbolism in sound, making its appeal not merely to the senses, but to the intellect through the senses. And the first great form of modern instrumental music arose not out of the shreds and patches of popular piping and harping, but out of the suggestions of choral music, which, as has been said, was the first branch of music to develop into an elaborated artistic form. When the possibilities of the Fugue form, already referred to, had once been perceived in choral music, it was but a step further to the perception that the same form might be made use of in instrumental

music, with the greater freedom of outline and elaboration of detail which the use of instruments permits. And in the fullness of time appeared the greatest of all constructors in music, Bach, to whom, as Schumann observed, music owes almost as great a debt as a religion owes to its Founder, and who was to show for all time what could be done in the way of musical expression and musical symbolism through the Fugue form. And although Fugue is a very severe and scientific form of musical structure, it must not be supposed for a moment that Bach wrote fugues to show his scientific mastery of his materials; he wrote them to produce music. All musical composition, and instrumental music above all, must have a distinct and consistent form, to render it a work of Art. Art *is* Form: the Fugue form was the highest and most expressive form recognised in the time of Bach, consequently he threw his greatest musical ideas into that form. Had he lived half a century later, he would

probably have thrown them into another great musical form, to be described presently.

To thoroughly appreciate the beauty of a fugue some degree of musical knowledge is no doubt necessary; just as, to thoroughly appreciate the beauty of a Gothic cathedral, some knowledge of the conditions of masonry structure is necessary. The comparison is the more apt, since in an æsthetic sense Fugue has more affinity with architecture than any other form of music. It is a complicated structure built up of moving sounds, in accordance with certain accepted conditions of proportion and structural relation. An instrumental fugue, *pur sang*, even if written for one instrument, such as the organ or pianoforte, always maintains its distribution into so many distinct "parts"; *i.e.* a four-part fugue is treated, and is to be regarded, as if it were a composition sung by four voices, each preserving its own independent course. It commences always by the proposal of

the subject in one part, taken up in succession by the others. The commencement of the first fugue in Bach's *Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues* will serve as an illustration; the successive entries of the subject are marked 1, 2, 3, 4:



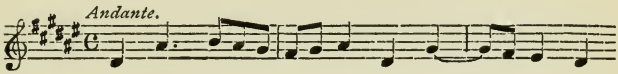
This is a short and concentrated fugue, which keeps very close to the subject throughout. In larger compositions of the

kind there is generally an episode in which the main subject is ignored for the time—a temporary excursion into a new region; then there will be a "counter-subject," differing in character from the principal subject but working with it; there will be the device (often used by Bach) of "inverting" the subject, turning it upside down, so that the higher notes of the original design become the lower ones in the inverted design, and *vice versâ;* though to do that with ease and fluency requires the hand of a master. Now in music of this school the hearer assuredly will not find that intimate appeal to the emotions which he will find, for example, in many of the works of Beethoven, any more than he could find the colour and passion of Shelley or Tennyson in the poetry of the eighteenth century. The poetry and the music of the nineteenth century express, and appeal to, feelings which did not even exist in the eighteenth century. But let him not imagine that this scientifically ordered music

is without a great poetic symbolism of its own. The great preludes and fugues for the organ, of Bach's later period, after he had discovered the true powers and limitations of the instrument (which took him the greatest part of his musical life), are among the most sublime productions of instrumental music; as Spitta, Bach's biographer, truly says, they are the only instrumental compositions which, for scale and for elevation of style, can be fairly classed with Beethoven's symphonies.[1] The *Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues* (*Das Wohl-temperirte Klavier* in the original German title) for the pianoforte, or rather for its small and weak-toned predecessor, the Clavier, are full of poetic fancy and suggestion. Take, for instance, the one in

[1] That these great works are almost unknown to the musical public arises from the fact that the organ is an unfashionable instrument; and also, it must be admitted, that English organs are not suited to give effect to Bach's organ works, composed for the quite different tone and balance of sound of the old German organs. To represent Bach's organ-music properly, all our large English organs would have to be built over again on a different system.

D sharp minor from Book I; the subject is a tender and expressive melody—



introduced now in its original form, now inverted, and on the last page appearing three times in an "augmented" form—*i.e.* in notes twice as long as in the original subject, the other parts wreathing a delicate ornamentation round it; yet with all this scientific elaboration there is not one moment of constraint or apparent difficulty; it all flows from beginning to end as easily and naturally as if it had grown spontaneously. In some of these "well-tempered" fugues one is surprised to find what a great composition can be evolved from an apparently very simple and unpromising subject; as the speaker in "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha" says [1]:

> "First you deliver your phrase—
> Nothing propound, that I see,
> Fit in itself for much blame or much praise."

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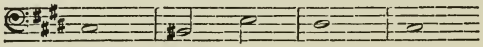
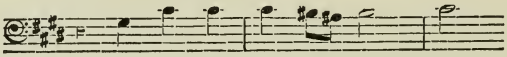
[1] Some of those bold bad men who belong to Browning Societies have attempted to maintain that this poem has

The most wonderful example of this kind of evolution, perhaps, to be found in all music is the Fugue in C sharp minor in the First Book of the "Forty-eight." It is built on this stern iron-bound subject

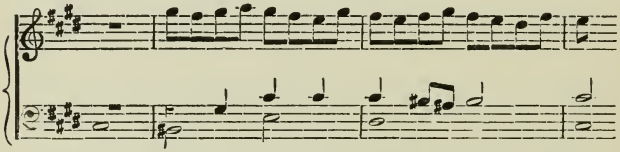


which is waited on presently by an equally simple counter-subject:



This is also joined by a secondary counter-subject,

the three fitting together thus:



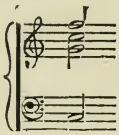
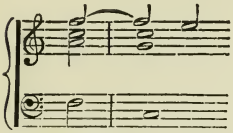
some deep philosophic bearing on life in general. Nothing of the sort; it is simply a humorous analysis of the musical value of organ fugues, and "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha" is no other than John Sebastian Bach. It must not be taken to represent Browning's own attitude; it is merely the dramatic representation of one view of the case as it occurred to the old organist, who was a little out of temper at the time.

But nothing is heard of the principal counter-subject till the middle of the fugue, when it slips in, in an apparently quite perfunctory manner, the hearer little thinking what fires are to break from it before the close of the composition. To quote what the present author wrote of it in a book published some twenty years ago: "To my fancy this wonderful fugue has always seemed like the musical reflection of some great appeal in oratory—commencing with the almost cold unimpassioned statement of the case; gradually crowding argument upon argument, apostrophe upon apostrophe, till in the fervour of passion logic itself rises into rhetoric, and we are swept along to the climax by a torrent of burning words."[1] There could be no more pregnant example of the quality of symbolism in instrumental music; and he who can hear this fugue, at the hands of a competent player, without feeling his very life-blood

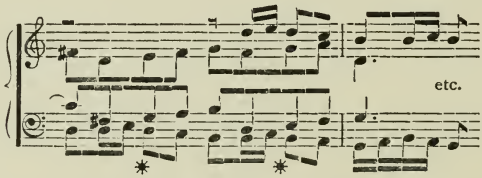
[1] *My Thoughts on Music and Musicians.*

quickened by it, can have little music in his soul.

Before passing to the other great typical form of instrumental music, a word may be said as to the part which discords play in music. When it was observed (page 44) that the vocal part-writing of the old Italian school consisted of melodies arranged "so that their combined effect should be agreeable and harmonious to the ear," that is not to say that the music consisted only of concords. The best music even of the great classical masters consists more of discords than of concords. To put it in the most comprehensive terms, the concord is the only point of rest; the discord is accepted as a passage to the point of rest. In the old school of vocal music few discords were accepted as admissible, and then only when the discordant note had been heard as a concord in a previous harmony, and was sustained and then made to drop on to a concordant note in the following harmony ("resolved" is the

term used in musical theory). For instance,  would be inadmissible unless it were arrived at in this kind of way:  . This system, called "the preparation and resolution of discords," though it has long ceased to be a dogma, has exercised a great and vital effect on musical composition. Bach's most sublime organ composition, the Fugue in the Doric mode, is one almost continuous chain of prepared and resolved discords. It pervades nearly all the work of Bach, Handel, Haydn, and Mozart; it is to a great extent tacitly acted on by Beethoven (though he would probably have scouted it as a formula), and its traditional influence is still often obvious even in the work of the most emancipated modern composers. And in the Fugue form of music there is another

sense in which discords have a logical sanction, viz. when they arise naturally and inevitably out of the movement of the parts; Fugue being a structure formed out of several melodies moving in conjunction. Take the following passage, for instance, from the fugue in A minor in Book I of the "Forty-eight Preludes and Fugues":



Anyone who struck separately the two combinations marked * would have the sensation of a harsh discord, but no such impression is produced when the whole passage is played; the ear, one may say, unconsciously reasons, and recognises that the discord is really a kind of interim result of the free movement of the four parts, which is not to be disturbed to avoid a mere physical jar to the ear. Hence it has been well said that in music of this

school harmony is to be read *horizontally*, being a result of the onward progress of the several parts, while in instrumental music of the more modern type (the free school, as opposed to the contrapuntal school) harmony is to be considered *vertically*, as built up from the bass note, and often maintained for a considerable time without essential change. In the first movement of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, for instance, there are two passages where the same harmony is continued through forty bars, the sense of movement being only given by the variations of detail.

It was in this free school of composition that there was organised the second great musical form, the Sonata form. The expression "Sonata form" must not be confounded with "Sonata." The latter word was originally applied, rather vaguely, to a short piece of instrumental music. In the time of Haydn and Mozart it had come to mean an extended composition, for one or at most two instruments, divided into

several sections or "movements," as they are called, of contrasted character; in the Mozart period generally three; with Beethoven more often four. A composition in the same form for piano and two or more other instruments might just as logically be called a Sonata, but in practice it is not; it is called a Pianoforte Trio, Quartet, or Quintet, according to the number of additional instruments employed. A composition in the same form for a full band is called a "Symphony," but it is the same thing as a Sonata on a larger scale: a Symphony is a Sonata for the orchestra, a Sonata is a Symphony for the piano, or for the piano and one other instrument. In the Symphony the four-movement scheme predominated from the first. The scheme on which the four movements are planned is generally this: the first movement, almost always the most important and dignified of the set, is a quick movement; the second is a slow movement, always in a different key from

the first one; the third is a shorter and lighter movement, generally in the main key of the work—in the Mozart symphony form it is a dance tune, a minuet; the finale is a quick movement, generally of brighter and more brilliant character than the first movement, though there are exceptions to this; in Beethoven's Fifth Symphony the finale is the largest in scale and the most dignified and important of the whole, and the same is the case in some more modern symphonies. Beethoven also introduced an important modification of the third movement, substituting for the sober minuet of the Haydn and Mozart symphony a more extended and exuberant style of composition which he called *Scherzo;* an example which most of his successors have followed. This arrangement of the four movements is the typical one. Haydn, in his Quartets, generally preferred, for some reason, to place his minuet before the slow movement instead of after it, and Beethoven adopted

the same order in his Ninth Symphony; but in all his other symphonies he retains what we have called the typical arrangement of the four movements.

Now the expression "Sonata form" is applied to the form in which the first movement of a Symphony or Sonata was almost invariably cast. It is the form which above all others combines dignity with variety of effect; by the latter part of the eighteenth century it had pushed aside the Fugue form, except for choral composition and for occasional use at pleasure; and it has dominated instrumental music on a great scale almost down to the present moment; it is still constantly used for important compositions, and even where its original form has been much modified or much amplified, we can still trace the lines of the old Sonata form beneath the drapery of modern elaboration. As the Fugue form was derived from vocal music, the Sonata form was derived from an earlier and simpler form of instrumental

music. In the time of Handel and Bach the most important instrumental compositions, next to Fugues, were what were called "Suites des Pièces"—collections of short pieces based on the measure of what were once popular dance tunes: *Courante, Allemande, Sarabande, Minuet, Gavotte, Gigue,*[1] &c.; sometimes prefaced by a prelude or overture; but all in the same key. Some of Handel's and Bach's Suites are of great beauty and interest, though it seems curious that it never occurred to either of these great composers to relieve the tonal monotony by writing some of the movements in different keys. Handel did not confine himself to the dance-tune measures, as in five out of his principal set of eight Suites he introduces completely worked-out fugues, one of them, in the E

[1] There is a reference to these popular dance tunes in *Twelfth Night*, where Sir Andrew Aguecheek has been boasting of his bodily agility, and Sir Toby replies, "Why are these gifts hid? Why dost thou not go to church in a galliard and come home in a coranto? My very walk should be a jig": but Sir Toby's further suggestions are unquotable.

minor Suite, one of the finest keyboard fugues ever written; Bach, except in his Preludes or Overtures, mostly keeps to the dance-tune measures, but in a much more highly elaborated form than they had in the days when they were actually used to dance to; they are in fact short abstract compositions founded on dance-tune measures. Now what the Sonata form really did was to take these dance-tune measures and weld them into a consistent whole by connecting passages. Like the Fugue form, it grew up and developed almost fortuitously; Haydn felt his way to it by degrees, Mozart perfected it. In the Sonata form as shaped by him, there is always a principal subject and a second subject, the latter contrasted in character, and in a different key from the first subject; so that here we get rid of the key-monotony of the Suites. These two subjects are connected together by subordinate passages and woven into a general design of which they are the prominent elements; and in

the middle of the movement there is always an episode in which the principal subjects, or parts of them, are played with and dissected in various ways (sometimes treated in counterpoint), as if to see what more can be got out of them before they are returned to in their original form. Beethoven, in spite of the very different character and the intenser expression of his music, kept to this form throughout his career, only adding one important refinement on Mozart's practice. Mozart almost invariably makes a complete pause before introducing his second subject, and then, as it were, starting afresh with it; Beethoven makes it arise, as if spontaneously, out of what preceded it; thus filling up, we may say, the only gap in Mozart's æsthetic.

This adoption and repetition of leading subjects in a composition, so far from producing monotony of effect, is the very way out of it. A long instrumental composition consisting of successive musical ideas, treated and then dropped and not

returned to, would become wearisome to the hearer, because deficient in any definite design or motive. Treated in a form like the Sonata form, a musical composition becomes a consistent whole, in which every detail has a relation to the main design. In Mozart's Symphony in G minor, for instance, perhaps the most beautiful instrumental composition ever written, passionate feeling is expressed in a form which is not only perfectly balanced and consistent as a whole, but in which there is not a note out of place or redundant, not a phrase which does not belong implicitly to the whole, and could not belong to any other composition. That is the perfection of musical art.

Among other important forms of modern composition is the *Rondo* form (often used for the concluding movement of a symphony or sonata), which has only one principal subject, returned to again and again, in a kind of round (hence the name); the complete rondo form is, however,

always diversified in the middle by an episode introducing a contrasting idea, but which is only an episode, and is not in general returned to. The well-known finale of the Sonate Pathétique is one of the finest and one of the most symmetrical examples. Then there is a form often used for the slow movement of a symphony or sonata, which is sometimes called the *Binary* form, consisting of two principal musical ideas of equal importance which appear alternately, though generally with a difference of detail each time; the slow movement of Beethoven's Symphony in C minor is a good example. Then there is the *Variations'* form, which before Beethoven's time was not of very great importance (though Bach did write one set of very formidable dimensions); some of Mozart's sets of Variations, either separate compositions or introduced as part of a sonata, are charming, but they consist of ornamental variations on the surface, as one may say, of the theme. Beethoven,

in the Variations which form the first movement of his early Sonata, Op. 26, at once struck out a new line in this class of composition ; he showed that the " Variation " might be a variation not merely of the surface form, but of the spirit and structure of the original theme. The Variations' form, treated in this sense, was a favourite with him always (the choral finale to the Ninth Symphony is, in fact, Variations on a colossal scale), and since he thus put his stamp on it, it has been recognised as a serious and most suggestive form of composition, in which some noble modern works have been written. There is one other phase in musical form to be noted, the *coda* (literally " tail "). This is a short addition at the close of an important composition, not part of the general design, but added to give dignity to the close and prevent the impression of the musical design having been too abruptly cut short. The coda may be formed out of part of the preceding materials, as in the *Presto* at the end

of Beethoven's Symphony in C minor, or it may be an entirely separate idea; for instance, in the Variations in Beethoven's Op. 26 Sonata, just referred to, the last sixteen bars of the concluding variation form the coda to the whole, but they introduce a melody which has not occurred previously in the composition. One of the finest and most effective codas in existence is that at the close of Mendelssohn's Wedding March; the triumphant strains of the march theme have said all they could of joy, but one could not merely cut it off and stop abruptly at the end, so he puts the crown to it with this coda in which the whole air seems to ring with the long shakes and the *fanfares* of the brass instruments, a kind of tumult of exultation; it is a stroke of real genius.

The form of composition called a *Concerto* deserves a separate mention; it is sometimes a puzzle to those who do not realise its special nature. A concerto is a composition for a solo instrument with or-

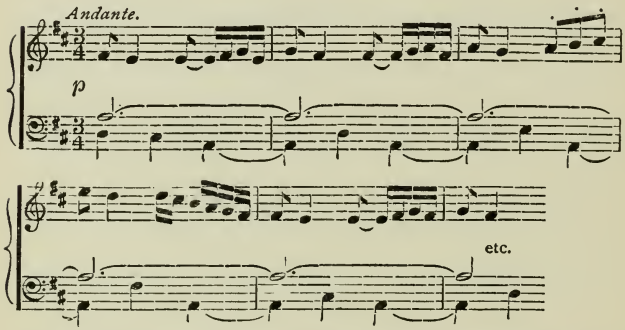
chestral accompaniment, in which the object is to show the most that can be accomplished by the special faculties of the instrument in the hands of an executant of the highest powers. The effect is partly produced by the combination of some of the orchestral instruments with the solo instrument, partly by brilliant solo passages for the latter, interspersed between passages for the orchestra alone, which give the solo player a rest from time to time. All this changing about, although the movement may really be written in orthodox Sonata form, involves an apparent breaking up of the form which it requires a little musical education to follow and appreciate. It is within the author's own knowledge that people with a real love of music, who will follow with enjoyment a symphony or sonata, do not sometimes care for a concerto ; the peculiar form puzzles them.

The pianoforte is the most effective concerto instrument, because it affords such a contrast to the tone of the band, its

showers of hard metallic notes glittering against the orchestral accompaniment, like a fountain playing against a background of dark foliage. In Mozart's time a concerto always commenced with a long passage for the orchestra, giving out the principal subjects of the movement—it commenced like a symphony, in fact; the solo instrument entered after all this was over. But Beethoven, in his Fourth Pianoforte Concerto, let the piano prelude with a few bars by itself, announcing the principal subject; and in his Fifth (the king of concertos) he made a still bolder innovation; immediately after the first chord has been sounded by the orchestra, the pianoforte rushes off into a whole series of brilliant scale passages, arpeggios, and shakes, which have nothing whatever to do with the main design of the composition; it is a kind of splendid advertisement of the special powers of the instrument: "This is a pianoforte concerto; let us show them first what the pianoforte can

do!" After which the orchestra settles down to the usual preliminary statement of the materials which are to form the composition.

All these questions of form in music are of the things that can be apprehended intellectually; they can be explained in words. But what is it in music that appeals so deeply also to our emotions? How and why is it that the melody in the slow movement of the Ninth Symphony, given out by the poignant tone of the violins and violas in unison—



seems to sum up the whole sadness and longing of humanity, so as to bring tears to our eyes as we hear it? We cannot

tell; we cannot analyse it; we can only feel it. And therefore it is that the creation of a melody is the most pure form of musical inspiration. It requires, no doubt, the hand of a master to grasp and control the structure, the harmonic treatment of a great composition; but that can be analysed by the hearer, and the composer's powers in that sense can be, must be, in fact, developed and strengthened by arduous study; as Beethoven said, it was the business of a composer to develop his power of handling the materials of music by strict and severe study in harmony and counterpoint in his early years, so that when ideas came to him he might be prepared to treat them adequately; and he illustrated the precept in his own practice. But the ideas, whence come they? That the composer himself cannot tell us. All we know is that (as reams of dead compositions do testify) structural power will not keep life in a composition unless it is based on noble or pathetic melodies; and

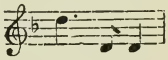
the production of these is a matter of pure inspiration.[1] A composer who has evolved a new melody has created an absolutely new entity. But the converse is also true; melodic expressiveness will not keep a composition alive without structural interest. Music is melodic inspiration treated in artistic form and structure.

Does instrumental music, then, *mean* nothing? That is to ask a very large and at present much debated question. When Mendelssohn was asked the meaning of one of his compositions, he made the very sensible reply: "The meaning is the music itself, and I do not see how it can be expressed otherwise." Mozart would have

[1] It is true, however, that a melodic idea may be deliberately improved upon after the first inspiration; a fact of which Beethoven's sketch-books afford interesting evidence. Some of the finest of his melodies—that of the slow movement of the C minor symphony, for instance—appear first in a form quite inferior to that in which we now know them. In one place he has sketched a possible melody to be worked into a composition, and then dismissed it with the characteristic marginal comment: "Nothing can come of that." The melodic phrase might have been a good one in itself, but his acquired structural instinct warned him that it would not work out into anything.

said the same. Beethoven possibly would not, yet he practically acted on the same principle in regard to all but a few of his compositions, and his answers to a similar question once or twice put to him were merely vague evasions of the point. But he did say to a friend, at the time when he was composing the "Eroica" Symphony (his third symphony) that he had been all wrong about music hitherto, and was going to take a new line with it; and of course when we find the word "Eroica" attached to the symphony (it was really intended as a work in honour of the First Consul) it is easy to read the meaning in the martial first subject; in the indications of conflict in other passages: in the exquisite pathos of the second subject, with its phrases that go sighing from one instrument to another, like the memories of past happiness in the midst of the conflict: and the Funeral March, of course, speaks for itself. But the other two movements have no obvious connection with the label of the symphony;

and the next symphony, the Fourth, is pure abstract music, and might be described as the *joie de vivre* put into artistic form. The Fifth Symphony (the C minor) is obviously a kind of symbolism of distress and strife ending in triumph; it has no label, but is more evidently a moral of life than anything else in music. The Seventh Symphony, so fiery and intense in character, sounds as if there must be some definite idea behind it; but not a hint is given. The Eighth Symphony is purely abstract music. Of his great series of pianoforte sonatas one only—"L'Adieu-L'Absence-Le Retour"—is labelled with a meaning; unless we include in the same category the early work called "Sonate Pathétique," but that title is really only a kind of apology for the novelty of style of the work, so different from anything that had preceded it in pianoforte music; it is as if he had said: "This is a sonata to express passionate feeling, not to exhibit pianoforte technique." The plain truth is that however

music may occasionally be employed to illustrate an idea expressed in words, its very *raison d'être* is that it expresses that which cannot be expressed in words. And a composer of genius does not need a recondite poetical or literary idea to set the wheels of his fancy going. Beethoven himself mentioned to someone that at the moment of entering a brilliantly-lighted hall out of the dark street, the change suggested in his mind the phrase  There was the germ of the tremendous Scherzo of the Ninth Symphony, which all arises out of that phrase.

But Beethoven did write one great work, the Pastoral Symphony (No. 6), which is openly and avowedly the expression of definite ideas, and may be said to be the parent or forerunner of all modern "programme music," as it is called; though the composer took care to define his position by adding to the title the comment: "More an expression of feeling than a

painting" (*Mehr Ausdruck der Empfindung als Malerei*). For the most part the composition completely justifies this claim; even in the thunderstorm what we hear is not so much the attempt to imitate a storm (which would be simply commonplace) as a translation into music of the effect of the storm on the composer's mind; just as a great landscape painter gives us not the mere detail of a landscape but the impression which it produced on his mind. In this sense the vividness of impression of the country produced in this symphony is throughout quite wonderful; in the first movement especially the effect produced on the mind is so similar to that produced by the sight of open country and the feel of the breezes blowing over it, that if one were ignorant of the causes it would be difficult to distinguish the mental effect of the music from that of the scene. The only blemish in the work is the unfortunate introduction, at the close of the exquisite second move-

ment, of an attempted realistic imitation of birds. This was defended, in the analytical programme of a London concert, by saying that the composer "had at all events connected it with the general design," which is exactly what he has not done; it is dragged in arbitrarily at the close, instead of forming any part of the main material of the composition. And the opportunity may be taken to warn concert-goers against accepting all the opinions in an analytical programme, however ably written; remembering that the object of such programme analyses always is *to write up the music,* not to suggest an impartial estimate of it. To Beethoven the birds' passage was no doubt a little joke, but it is a joke unhappily placed, because it spoils an otherwise perfect composition. The joke of the village bassoon-player in the next movement, who can only play two notes, the keynote and fifth, is another matter; that is a bit of real humour, quite in place in a sketch of a

rustic merry-making; and in this case the joke forms part of the structure of the composition.

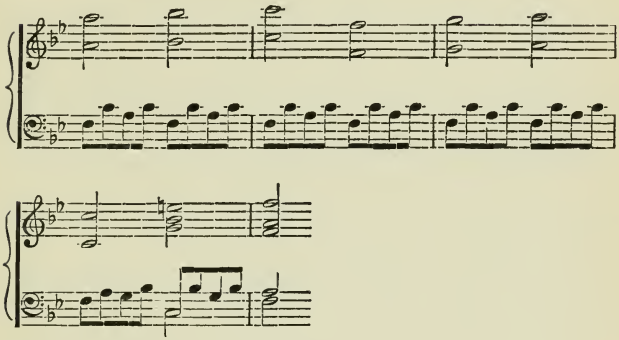
Yet such a work as this cannot be placed on the same intellectual level as such a great piece of abstract music as the Seventh Symphony which follows it; it is the weakest of the symphonies except the first two, in which Beethoven had not yet found his own style. But it has been, for good or ill, the precursor of a widely-extended modern movement in the direction of programme music; a movement which is at the present moment more popular than ever. A large proportion of the instrumental compositions produced in the present generation openly propose to illustrate an idea which can be expressed in words. Many of these compositions are of much interest, but one result of the system is that a composition is judged not so much on its intrinsic merits as a handling of musical materials, as on its significance as the illustration of

a special title, and it depends for its effect largely on the idea suggested by the written title. When we see the title "Après-midi d'un Faune" appended to a composition, our imagination is at once stimulated by the idea of the old far-away world of Greek mythology, and we are interested to hear how the composer has characterised this in music. But we are entirely dependent on the title; without that the composition would appear a mere fantasy, rambling and inconclusive in design; and if it were played without the title, not a soul in the audience would think of "L'Après-midi d'un Faune," nor would any two of them, probably, agree as to the meaning they would attach to the music. Delius's orchestral fantasy, "Night in a great city," may serve as another example; after hearing it through, though we have listened to some very rambling and in some parts rather ugly music, one does feel at the end that a kind of panorama of night in a city has been symbolised for us; but no one

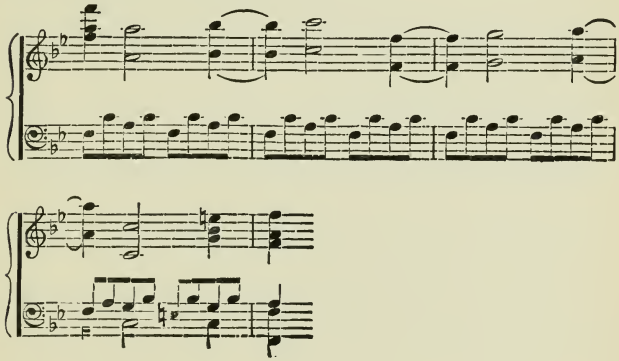
could ever make that out of the music itself, without the label at the head. These and other such instances show that while instrumental music can illustrate a definite literary idea, it cannot of itself express one. It is its glory, in truth, that it cannot; that while appealing to our emotions, it leaves our imagination free. These experiments in illustrating literary ideas are by no means to be condemned; they place music in a new light and give it a new interest; but the considered judgment on them must probably be that they represent an era of decadence, an attempt to force new results out of an art which has passed its climax and lost its spontaneity.

It was observed that when modern music emerged from the sea of non-rhythmical harmony of the early Italian school, it adopted rhythm as an essential quality —rhythmical accent defined by the division into bars. It does not follow, however, that the accent of the music always coincides with the bar-accent. One of the

most striking passages in Beethoven's Fourth Symphony derives its effect almost entirely from a cross accent at variance with the bar-accent. In its simple elements of melody and harmony the passage would stand thus :



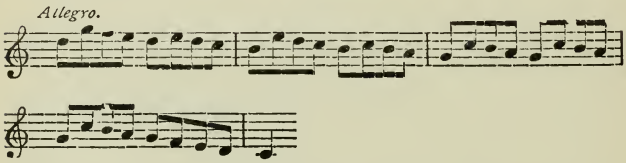
It actually stands thus :



That cross accent gives wings, as it were, to the whole passage; it seems to soar above us—

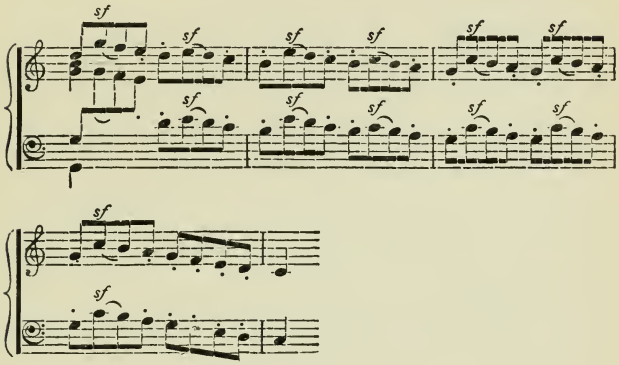
> "With the pride and ample pinion
> That the Theban eagle bear,
> Sailing with supreme dominion
> Thro' the azure deep of air."

Perhaps a still more striking example of the effect of cross accent may be found in the unison passage in the finale of the Symphony in C minor, which leads to the introduction of one of the secondary subjects. If we take the mere notes (played in octaves)



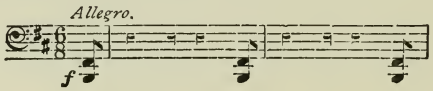
with what may be called the conventional accent on the first of each group of four notes, it is only an ordinary scale passage, such as any one might have written; but by the device of putting a strong accent

on the *second* note in each group, where it is unexpected,



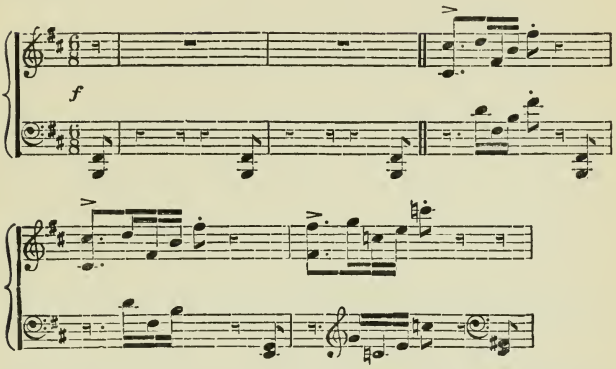
it is transformed into a passage of tremendous force and energy, which seems to carry us off our feet each time it recurs. The reader should play it, or get it played for him, first with the ordinary bar accent, and then with the accent as marked, on the second note of each group; nothing could better illustrate the effect of cross accent. In connection with this point it may be observed that in a good deal of modern music, in the works of Schumann and Brahms especially, the effort to get

new and recondite efforts of rhythm plays a considerable part in musical expression. Schumann, in fact, rather overdid it, for a good many of his rhythmical experiments, like the well-known second subject in the finale of his pianoforte concerto, can only be recognised as cross accents when the music is seen on the page ; they are merely written in one *tempo* to sound as if written in another. But there is more in it than this. An example may be given from Brahms' little pianoforte piece in B minor, called "Intermezzo." This commences with the harmony of the keynote and fifth being sounded three times, with a bar interval between each :



and the hearer no doubt takes those notes, at the outset, to represent the first beat of each bar ; and so far, it seems as if it would be just the same if they were written so. But it is not ;

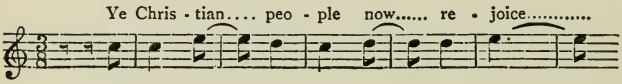
when the real theme is introduced, thus :



the hearer then discovers that the repeated notes in the bass are on the last and not the first beat of the bar, and *why* they are so ; it is a feature that runs all through the composition, but is introduced in such a way as to prepare a little rhythmical surprise for the listener.

A very curious and characteristic example of two opposing rhythms being carried on simultaneously occurs in the first movement of Sterndale Bennett's beautiful and much-neglected little oratorio, *The Woman of Samaria.* The composition

is in $\frac{3}{8}$ time—three quavers in a bar, and the band keeps up the triple accent throughout, but when the voices are introduced, singing a chorale above the accompaniment of the band, their part is so arranged that they appear to be singing in $\frac{2}{4}$ time, with quite a different accent from that of the accompaniment :



Taking the voice part by itself, this would be merely like the passage in Schumann's pianoforte concerto before referred to—a passage written in one measure to sound as if it were in another, and the device only obvious when one looks at the notes ; but when it is sung in conjunction with the marked $\frac{3}{8}$ rhythm of the accompaniment, it gives a genuine and very remarkable effect of mixed rhythms, the voice part seeming to come from another region from that of the accompaniment.

There are not wanting those who would

suggest that a regularly recurrent rhythm in music is a form of pedantry quite unnecessary to its highest expression. Wagner, in his literary effusions, was for ever girding at what he contemptuously called the "dance-tune" theory of music; and in many passages in his operas there is a perfectly obvious attempt to evade and break up the bar-accent, so that the hearer may not be conscious of it. He would probably have liked to sweep away the bar-divisions altogether, but that was practically impossible, because a large concourse of singers and instrumentalists, on and off the stage, could only be kept together by a conductor whose down-beat marks the commencement of each bar; without the bar-divisions conductor and performers would never know exactly where they were. His attempt to get rid of or disguise the bar-accent may have very well suited his special purpose, which was to render opera less musically conventional and bring it nearer to the con-

ditions of spoken drama. But for instrumental music rhythm is as essential as it is to poetry; it is the wings on which music soars; and to weaken or destroy rhythmical accent in instrumental music seems as reasonable as it would be to propose that poetry should cease to be verse and be written as prose.

It is, however, a characteristic of much of the new music of the day that rhythm, although not ostensibly thrown over, is uncertain and vague in its pulsation, a fact which contributes to give a further effect of uncertainty and vagueness of outline to the melodies introduced. It is rare, in this music of what is supposed to be the most advanced school, to come on a clearly-defined and rhythmical melodic inspiration; what takes the place of melody seems rather to be a kind of musical phraseology put together in a self-conscious manner. And these characteristics of detail are all a part of the general uncertainty as to the grasp of

form in modern music. The London Philharmonic Society furnished (whether intentionally or not) an instructive opportunity for critical comparison in this respect, when they closed their season in the spring of this year by a concert programme consisting only of two symphonies, each with a choral climax: Beethoven's Ninth, and the First Symphony of the Russian composer, Scriabine.[1] The latter is not, of course, on general grounds, a composer to be named in the same week with Beethoven; but the two works afforded a contrast of two schools. Scriabine's is quite pleasing music; occasionally more than pleasing; but what especially struck one about it, in comparison with the work of Beethoven, was what one might call the want of backbone in it. In Beethoven's symphony, however it may have its impassioned moments, we feel (except perhaps in some unfortunate passages in the finale)

[1] Scriabine's choral *finale* was not actually given, though the chorus-singers were there in their places. Probably insufficient rehearsal was the reason for this anomaly.

that these are framed within a definite structural scheme of which they form a part and to which they are subordinate. In Scriabine's symphony this sense of a controlling structural framework, if not entirely absent, is at all events not dominant. There are moments of intensely passionate expression; the conductor waves his arms wildly and the band go into a kind of frenzy, but we do not see why; it links up to nothing. That is typical of so much in the new music, especially of the Slavonic school; of so much also in Wagner; the idea that one can succeed by mere intensity of expression and effect, by exaggerating everything, independently of the restraints of artistic form and proportion. Art, whether in literature or music, is not concerned with the unrestrained and unabashed expression of human passion; and in music, as the gifted lady who writes under the name of Vernon Lee has remarked, there is something "almost shameful" in this kind of

abandonment of all self-control in the expression of passions which are latent in human nature, no doubt, but the unlicensed display of which is not consistent with the dignity either of art or of humanity. Musical composition of this type may be said to be addressed rather to the nervous system than to the intellect of the hearer; it is not so much musical art as musical hysterics.

We commenced by tracing the evolution of the system of sounds out of which music is made. There is something to be said also as to the nature of the instruments whereby they are produced, for that is an element in the materials of music, and one which has a great deal of influence on its effect and on the character of its detail. With the evolution of the instrumental symphony came the evolution of its exponent, the orchestra, the phalanx of instruments grouped according to a recognised system, producing music on a greater scale both of power and variety of tone

than any single instrument can produce. In Germany, before the advent of Bach and during the earlier part of his career, music on a great scale was furnished by "the storm their high-built organs made," by the fantasias and fugues played as "abend-musik" in the churches. In these, in which the organ was used simply to produce what was thought to be effective music, without much regard to the special character or capabilities of the instrument, we seem, as Spitta picturesquely expresses it, "to hear already the spirits of modern music hurtling at the door of their prison." In this respect the organ may be said to have been the precursor of the orchestra; but in Germany its true powers are represented and defined in the later works of Bach and in those of Mendelssohn, his best successor (*longo intervallo* certainly) in this respect, whose organ compositions are among the finest things which he produced. In France and England the organ has never been properly understood; it

is often used for noisy fantasias or for sentimental melodies played on one keyboard with a superficial pianoforte-like accompaniment on another; whereas its real power lies in the expression of grave and severely-knit harmonised music (it being the only instrument on which a note can be sustained in full force for any required length of time), and in the vast scale of its sounds—"this omnipotence of music," as Schumann called it. But it is not a sufficiently mobile instrument to respond to the call of all the various shades of emotion which demand expression through the medium of instrumental music.

In the time of Bach and Handel a good many experiments were made (by Bach especially) in the introduction of various wind instruments as part of the band, but not on any definite system. The orchestra as a systematic arrangement of instruments developed *pari passu* with the symphony; first tentatively essayed by Haydn

(who in his old age said pathetically: "I have but just learned how to use the wind instruments, and now I must die!"), and brought to the foundation of its present form by Mozart. That form consists of four classes or groups of instruments. First come *stringed instruments* played with the bow—violin, viola or tenor violin, violoncello, and contra-basso, which form the most important part of the band, both in regard to their numbers and to their facility in rapid execution of almost all kinds of passages. Next comes the *wood-wind* group—flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon (*fagotto*)—and in modern orchestras piccolo flute, bass clarinet, and contra-fagotto or double-bassoon; there are also three old wood-wind instruments which have been more or less revived of late—the cor anglais, which is a kind of tenor oboe with a very marked individuality of tone; the basset-horn, which may be regarded as a kind of tenor clarinet; and the oboe di caccia, which is somewhat like a tenor

bassoon. Then we come to *brass-wind*—trumpet, horn, trombone, and in modern orchestras bass tuba. Last comes *percussion*, in which the only really important instruments, in a musical sense, are the kettle-drums (*timpani*) which, two or sometimes three, are alone tuned to definite musical notes, and form a very important element in orchestral effect. The other percussion instruments—triangle, cymbals, side-drums,[1] bass drum, &c., merely produce characteristic noises, and are not much used in the highest class of music. The harp, which is a good deal used for special effects in modern orchestral music, cannot be grouped with the other stringed instruments, being radically different in character and capabilities; it is really a refined type of percussion instrument. It

[1] These small drums, which produce a long rattle, are often popularly supposed to be the kettle-drums. The latter consist of large copper or brass vessels of hemispherical shape, with a skin stretched across the top, fixed in such a manner that it can be tightened or relaxed to produce different notes. They look something like large boilers or kettles; hence the name.

is very well that a place has been found for it as an element in orchestral colouring, for owing to its lack of any power of sustained melody it can never take any important place as a solo instrument, and its once great popularity in English drawing-rooms, during a very unmusical period of our national life, was due merely to fashion and to the fact that it is a very graceful instrument for a lady to handle. In the days when Miss Crawford delighted the party at Mansfield Park with her harp, a girl who played the violin would have been considered to have unsexed herself.

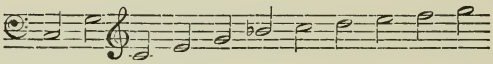
This marshalling of the orchestra into definite groups of instruments on a recognised system is an immense advantage to the composer, who writes for the orchestra as for a huge instrument whose capabilities and range of effect are settled and known. But these capabilities were only gradually appreciated. There is all the difference between using the various instruments only to produce more sound, and using

them to produce special effects. In Handel's orchestra there were a number of violins and an equal number of oboes, and they are often used, especially in his overtures, in answer and contrast to each other in alternate passages; an effect which is entirely lost in the modern performances of his music with only the two oboes used in the modern orchestra. For any proper performance of his orchestral works and oratorios, we ought to have the orchestra he wrote for. Bassoons he had also, but in general they only play with the violoncellos to strengthen the general body of sound. The reduction of the number of oboes and bassoons to two of each came about with the discovery that they could be used not merely to swell the body of sound, but to give special expression to special passages, especially to play melodies accompanied by the strings; as Haydn said, he was "just discovering how to use the wind instruments" at the close of his career. Mozart fully discovered this, as

far as the scope of his orchestra went; no one knew more precisely than he did what kind of passage each instrument could play with effect. The addition of clarinets to the wood wind, in his time, was a great joy to him; he writes enthusiastically to his father, during the early period of his career: "You cannot think what a beautiful effect a symphony with clarinets has." What he could do with them he showed in that exquisite Trio to the Minuet in his Symphony in E flat, where, after the bold sweeping phrases of the Minuet for full orchestra, we have the Trio with one clarinet playing a lovely melody accompanied by the other one in arpeggio passages, just punctuated by the subdued notes from the strings giving the foundation of the harmony. Simple as it is, it is one of the most poetic effects in music; it is as if we had been suddenly transported from the midst of a joyous *fête champêtre* to a far-removed dell, to hear the sounds of fairy music in the moonlight.

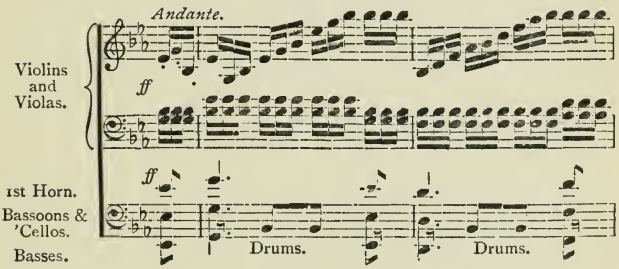
Thus the function of the wind instruments came to be, either to give voice, one of them, to a special melody accompanied by the strings; or for one or more to fill in and sustain the harmony against brilliant moving passages for the strings; or sometimes (as is so often the case with Beethoven) to hold little discourses among themselves while the strings are silent. And here we come upon an element in musical expression not hitherto mentioned —that expressed by the French word *timbre*, for which there is no precise English equivalent; it might be best translated "texture of sound." The notes of the horn, for instance, suggest the idea of a smooth surface, those of the bassoon a rough one; but each wind instrument has its own quality of tone and its own special powers of expression; plaintive and piercing, for instance, in the case of the oboe, broad and mellow in the clarinet, to which many a composer has confided his most cherished melodies. The bassoon can be

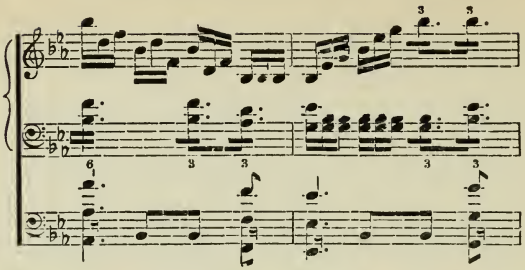
both expressive or, on occasion, grotesque, or what is perhaps better defined by the less incisive French word *baroque.* The flute is the high light of the orchestra, as we feel impressively when it introduces its mounting scale passage at the clearing off of the storm in the Pastoral Symphony —the veritable opening of a streak of blue sky between the clouds. The trumpets and horns, in their original form, acquired a character of their own from the fact that they could only play certain notes belonging to the harmonic series:



and in all but very modern scores they are written for on that supposition, so that the passages written for them acquire a certain character which becomes dear to us by association, and is in itself an element in orchestral effect. Nowadays the horns and trumpets are supposed, by the addition of valves, to play almost any passage one likes to write for them; but this liberty,

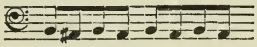
an advantage in one respect, is somewhat compensated by the loss of clearness of tone as well as of the peculiar character of their passages, which, especially in the case of the horn, had acquired a kind of consecration of its own. One of the most striking uses made of the horn in orchestral music is in the Andante movement at the end of the "Eroica" Symphony, where Beethoven brings in the principal subject in the bass, played by the contrabassi, violoncellos, and bassoons; but as he was determined that tune in the bass should be heard, he puts the first horn also on the top of all these, an octave higher, so that it comes out this way:





Perhaps few of those who hear that grand melody sung out by the first horn, which sounds above everything else (it is surprising what a noise a first horn can make when he gives his mind to it), realise that what they are hearing is not, structurally, the treble but the bass of the passage.

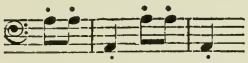
The trombones, among the brass wind, lead a separate life, having a character different from that of the trumpets and horns, and having a full scale of all the notes, but not with an ability to play them at any speed. Their notes are formed, like those of the original horns, in a harmonic series, but their piston arrangement, which lengthens their focal length at pleasure, enables the performer to start his harmonic series from different notes, so that

among them he can get all the semitones, but not very quickly in succession. Berlioz tells an amusing story of a composition in which there was a frequent repetition of this passage  for the trombones, which they found so difficult to execute that two players agreed one to take the B and the other the A sharp, but the efforts of the latter to get in his note *contra tempo* were not very successful, and caused a good deal of amusement at the rehearsal. The trombones are generally bracketed together in a group of three (alto, tenor, and bass), and play together in harmonised passages. They are instruments of tremendous and formidable power, and are often sadly misused to the production of an immense noise which drowns all the other detail of the orchestra.[1] Of all the

[1] The author was present one day at a rehearsal when the conductor could not get the trombones quiet enough in one passage, and at last said, "I wish you would use *sordini* for that passage." "We have not got any with us," said the players. "Then put your hats into them," was the reply.

great classical composers Mozart was the one who best understood the poetic use which can be made of the trombones for solemn and weird effect, instead of for mere noise. In the first movement of his *Requiem* the trombones give out four solemn chords, played softly, before the entry of the voices, and are then silent for the rest of the movement ; in *Don Giovanni* they are used, in a similar spirit, to accompany the supernatural voice of the spectre statue in the cemetery scene. They can no doubt have a grand effect when used *fortissimo,* at an appropriate moment in a composition ; but many a choral or orchestral movement has been spoiled and vulgarised by the continual blaring of the trombones all through it.

In regard to the stringed instruments in the orchestra it may be said that, beautiful and expressive as the violin and violoncello are as solo instruments, the true ravishment of their expressive power is only to be realised when they are em-

ployed in large numbers, *en masse*, in the orchestra. Of all the voices in which music speaks there is perhaps none so intense, so full of rich pathos, as that of the combined violoncellos playing an inner melody in the orchestra; as we hear it, for instance, in the second movement of the Pastoral Symphony. Then with the bow instruments there is also the contrasted effect occasionally produced by sounding the strings with the fingers (*pizzicato*) instead of with the bow; the *pizzicato* of the deep strings of the contrabassi being especially fine and effective. In the allegretto of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, the heavy pulsation of the *pizzicato* of the basses  accompanying the tender and expressive second subject, has the most strange and weird effect; it seems like the beating of the heart; it connects with the design of the principal subject, which moved to the same rhythmical figure, as if the remembrance of the

trouble and agitation of mind, so poignantly painted in the previous section of the movement, still remained with us under the consoling influence of the second subject. It might be interesting to know what Beethoven thought of in writing this strange and pathetic composition ; he has given no clue, and perhaps it is as well ; we can each give our own poetic interpretation to it. There is one incident in the composition that suggests the idea that it represents a kind of dream country ; it is prefaced by one long chord from the wind instruments, and the same chord, in the same sounds, reappears at the close. Are not these two chords like the gates through which we enter into and pass out of the enchanted land ? Another instance, little known, of the use of the *pizzicato* of the basses as a means of poetic suggestion, occurs in Handel's *Il Penseroso,* the setting of part of Milton's poem ; where it is made to represent the tolling of the curfew :

> "Over some wide-watered shore
> Swinging slow, with sullen roar."

An actual bell in the orchestra would have been mere realism, prosaic in effect; the heavy note of the bass strings, touched at intervals, suggests the sound in a manner which blends it with the general effect, and brings it within the domain of musical symbolism.

In recent days the number of the stringed instruments, in proportion to the others, has been very much increased, and the effect of these large string bands is very fine; but one result is that, for the older compositions, even as late as Beethoven, the balance between strings and wind, intended by the composer, is destroyed. In the finale of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, for instance, there is a twice-recurring incident in which a passage, played by the wind band and accompanied by chords from the strings, is then reversed, and played by the strings accompanied by chords from the wind. Obviously the two were intended to balance in effect, and in Beethoven's band, with probably a force of

between thirty and forty strings, they would have done so ; in the modern band, with sixty or more strings, they do not, and the effect is quite unequal and lopsided. The remedy would be, if we do not wish to give up the grand general effect of the large band, to double the wind instruments—not for general purposes, be it understood—two or four clarinets or oboes could not play a melody with the same finish and expression as a single instrument—but for passages played *en masse*. The only valid objection to it is the expense of paying extra players, and of course a large band is a costly thing enough ; but until it is done the *forte* passages in Beethoven's symphonies will never be heard, from the large bands of to-day, with the balance of effect which he intended. As for Mozart's symphonies, with their delicate line and detail, they ought never to be played by bands of the size usually mustered to-day ; they are quite unsuited to it. Some conductors, apparently, are beginning to find this out now.

Considering the power of intense and varied poetic expression inherent in the family of stringed instruments played by the bow, especially when heard *en masse*, it may be said that a little too much is made, in these days, of those *tour de force* compositions for the solo violin and violoncello, which Bach left behind him to pique the industry and ambition of modern executants. To their composer, who could never have heard these works actually played (for technique was not sufficiently advanced for that), they were obviously a kind of laboratory experiments, to see how much could, theoretically, be crammed on to a single instrument not naturally fitted for playing complicated combinations of notes. In hearing Bach's fugue for the violin, even at the hands of the most accomplished players (and only an executant of the first order can venture on it), we are all the time conscious of an effort to wrest from the instrument something which is outside of its proper faculty ; the difficulty of the per-

formance is far more obvious than the beauty of the result; the composition is ten times finer and more effective in the replica of it, in another key, which the composer afterwards made for the organ. The cause of music is not best served by compositions which involve a continual struggle with abnormal difficulties. I remember a great organ-player, the late W. T. Best, who was constantly striving (not unsuccessfully) to acclimatise the public to Bach's great organ works, remarking on the bad effect of this prominence given to Bach's *tour de force* solos for stringed instruments: "They come to a concert," he said, "and hear a man struggling to play a harmonised gavotte on the violoncello, and they think that represents Bach." In such a composition as Beethoven's violin concerto (which is worth more than all that Bach ever wrote for the violin put together), though it is difficult enough to demand the best efforts of a thoroughly educated player to do it

justice, the difficulties are such as develop the proper qualities of the instrument, not those which are foreign to it, and it is therefore far better art than most of Bach's solo violin compositions. The fact is that the violin, perfect and expressive as it is within its own sphere, is an instrument calculated to produce melody rather than harmony; it needs the harmonic background furnished for it by other instruments; its proper place as a solo instrument is in a concerto with orchestral accompaniment or a sonata with pianoforte accompaniment. So treated, it can produce beautiful results in a truly artistic form, because within its own proper capabilities.[1]

But the highest province of bowed instruments, treated as single instruments, and apart from their central kingdom in the orchestra, lies in the combination of

[1] Spohr wrote some sonatas for harp and violin, chiefly because his wife was a very fine harpist, and they used to play them together. The combination should be an effective one. They are never heard now, but some of them might be worth reviving.

four or five of them in the string quartet or quintet, the former being the most usual and, as one may say, the most classical arrangement, consisting of two violins, viola, and violoncello. This is one of the most delicate and refined forms of musical utterance, such as can only be adequately handled by a master in the art of composition. Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven are the great quartet writers; Haydn's repute as a great composer depends more on the perfection of style and structure in his numerous string quartets than on any of his productions on a larger scale. Even Mendelssohn and Spohr, both of them composers of a high order, and the latter one of the greatest violinists of his time, were only partially successful in this most exacting branch of composition, though Mendelssohn's quartets contain much beautiful music, and are rather unduly neglected at present. The mistake with both composers is that their quartet work too often seems like a solo for the first violin accom-

panied by the other instruments, whereas the ideal string quartet is a republic in which all are equal. Like the fugue, the string quartet is a composition formed by the simultaneous progress of four independent parts, consequently it demands a perfect grasp of structure in counterpoint; there are no "broad effects," as in the orchestra or the pianoforte trio, to cover up lapses in detail and weakness of structure; everything must be *perfect*, both in the composition and in the execution. What is implied in the latter requirement is perhaps hardly realised by many who listen to a string quartet played by first-class executants. It means that perfectly pure harmonies are produced (and the string quartet is the only medium for instrumental music which *can* produce perfectly pure harmony) by the united efforts of four players who have no guide to the production of exactly the right intonation except the acquired instinct of placing the finger on exactly the right place on the

string, equally in slow passages or in those of great rapidity. The perfect execution of a string quartet is one of the most remarkable examples of the triumph of mind over matter, of training over circumstance, that human effort can show.

And what of the pianoforte, the instrument in general most associated with our Lares and Penates? To understand the true central *métier* of the pianoforte, it must always be remembered that essentially it is a percussion instrument, and not a singing one; the effects most characteristic of it are those to be found in rapid and brilliant scale passages; in detached batteries of chords, successive or alternating between the two hands (a method often employed by Beethoven); in arpeggio passages, in the ripple of long chains of shakes, &c.; and in well-written pianoforte concertos these special powers are always largely represented. But the value of the pianoforte as an instrument for everyday life consists in its remarkable

versatility. Though not essentially an instrument for sustaining prolonged sounds, it can sustain them sufficiently to give expression to a melody,[1] and it can represent with equal ease any combination of notes in harmony; and hence a greater variety of music can be represented on the pianoforte, in an intelligible and enjoyable fashion, than on any other single instrument. If we want to get an idea of a new symphony or cantata, we can play it, to an intelligible extent, on the piano; we can enjoy a symphony arranged as a pianoforte duet; we can even try a new song on the piano, in the absence of a singer, by playing the voice part and making an *ex tempore* adaptation of the accompaniment. It is this versatility which renders it so useful as a household instrument, inde-

[1] Sterndale Bennett, in the slow movement of his one pianoforte Trio, has made the curious experiment of representing the pianoforte as the singing instrument, by opposing to it the still shorter and sharper notes of the *pizzicato* of the stringed instruments, so that the ordinary functions of piano and strings in combination seem to be reversed.

pendent of its really great beauty as a medium of music within its own special sphere. This versatility of the piano is practically exemplified in Beethoven's compositions for it. His concertos are all in pure pianoforte style ; his æsthetic instinct told him that for a concerto that was indispensable, since the very object of a concerto is to exhibit the special powers of the instrument. But some of the finest things in his sonatas are not really in pianoforte style, simply because they rise above it ; he wanted something higher than that, and he would use the pianoforte, with all its limitations, to give expression to his idea. The composer *par excellence* in pianoforte style is Chopin, who was a born pianist ; whose musical ideas seem to have taken form, as one may say, in terms of the pianoforte ; and whose compositions represent exactly what the pianoforte can do, and what no other instrument can. Hence as a composer his range is limited, but within that range he is perfect.

A word should be said here as to the immense æsthetic difference between the pianoforte and the organ, often not realised because both are actuated by the same form of keyboard. The essential distinction is that on the pianoforte both the quality and intensity of the sounds produced are directly influenced by the touch of the player, while on the organ the depression of the key merely opens a valve to admit air to a pipe under a mechanically-regulated pressure, which the player cannot alter; greater or less power of sound can only be produced by drawing out or shutting off a certain number of stops, which increase or diminish the number of pipes sounded by the pressure on one key. Thus there is a mechanical barrier interposed between the nervous organisation of the player and the production of the sound, and hence the organ is no instrument for representing delicate *nuances* of expression. There is indeed the device of the "Swell Organ" (an English inven-

tion originally), by which the pipes belonging to one keyboard are enclosed in a strongly-lined box, the front of which is composed of venetian shutters which can be opened or closed by a lever worked by the foot, and the effect of *crescendo* and *diminuendo* of the sounds is thus produced; and no doubt some beautiful effects have been added to the organ by this means, but they are not those which are most essential to and distinctive of the instrument, and are often much overrated and overworked. In Bach's organ music (and in organ composition it is almost a case of Bach first and the rest nowhere) there is in fact little opportunity for the use of the swell, except where the hands alone are in play; his pedal parts usually find full occupation for both feet. The other essential difference between the pianoforte and organ is that on the former a long note held down is diminishing in power every moment from the time it is struck, and finally "goes out," as it were, while on

the organ it is sustained with its full power for any length of time. Hence the organ is *par excellence* the instrument for giving effect to sustained and suspended harmonies ; as Dryden puts it in his "Ode for St. Cecilia's Day" (referring to the tradition that she invented the organ) :

> "At length divine Cecilia came,
> Inventress of the vocal frame;
> The sweet enthusiast from her sacred store
> Enlarged the former narrow bounds,
> And added length to solemn sounds,
> With nature's mother-wit, and arts unknown before."

Brilliancy, in a sense, is attainable on the organ ; such a composition as Bach's fugue in A minor is in fact a brilliant piece of *bravura,* and very effective as such. And the numerous stops on a large organ present a great variety of tone, so that in regard to effect the organist is somewhat in the position of an orchestral conductor who should be able to vary the combinations of instruments at any moment and in accordance with his own pleasure. But with all this the organ is

not an instrument for sentimental expression; its appeal is to the musical intellect.[1] The kind of feeling which the performance of a great composition in the true organ style should awaken is finely indicated by Chorley, in the picturesque chapter in his *Modern German Music* (the "modern" of sixty years ago) in which he describes his visit to the Sophien-Kirche at Dresden in company with Schneider, then the leading German organ-player. The organ was one of the old German instruments built by Silbermann, with only two manuals and no swell organ. Schneider wound up his Bach performances with the great Prelude and Fugue in E minor, a composition on such a scale that it may almost be called an organ symphony. Chorley writes:

"I withdrew to the further corner of the gallery, where twilight was now fast sinking; and while listening to this marvellous performance, lost the personality of both

[1] The whole subject of the musical capabilities of the organ is gone into in detail in the author's treatise on *The Organ and its Place in Musical Art*, to which the reader is referred.

composer and performer more completely, perhaps, than I have ever done. It was neither Bach nor Schneider; the building was filled, to running over, with august and stately music; and the old childish feeling of mystery and delight which, in the days when I was sparingly admitted to the acquaintanceship of any instrument whatever, the gigantic sounds of the organ used to awaken in me, came back."

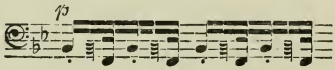
It is this "gigantic" character of the sounds of the organ which is another element in organ-music, and is one reason of the futility of the attempts (too frequently made at concerts in this country) to render these great works of Bach's on the pianoforte. If it ever occurred to the musical critics, who condone these performances, to compare Bach's compositions for the organ with those for the clavier, they might perhaps be led to consider why it is that the organ preludes and fugues are full of long solos and cadenzas for the bass part alone, while no such features are found in the "Wohltemperirte Klavier." It is simply because such passages have a grand effect on the organ in consequence of the great weight and thunder of the

pedal stops, which the pianists vainly try to imitate by banging these pedal solos in octaves on the piano. It is a question of scale, which counts for as much in music as in architecture. In other respects the effects of Bach's organ compositions are quite unpresentable on the pianoforte; there is neither the capacity for sustaining prolonged notes, nor the effect of variety and contrast of *timbre* obtainable from the numerous stops of the organ; it is as bad æsthetic as it would be to play pianoforte arrangements of Beethoven's symphonies at public concerts; and if the musical critics understood their business they would endeavour to put a stop to this absurdity, instead of encouraging it.

But whatever the grandeur and severity of the organ, the orchestra remains the greatest and most complete exponent of instrumental music on a large scale, and has to be studied and understood if the hearer is to get the most out of it. And therefore children who show any capacity

for music should be given as early as possible the opportunity of hearing the orchestra and becoming familiar with its language. The first hearing of an orchestra is, to the young listener, at once a revelation and a bewilderment. What seemed, when heard as an arrangement on the family pianoforte, to be charming tunes, clear-cut, easy to follow, but localised, as it were, within narrow limits, expands, when transferred to the orchestra, into a floating glory of sound. The difference between a melody cut clearly out on the single notes of the pianoforte, and the same melody floating in the air from the combined sounds of a number of violins or violoncellos, is almost like the difference between the prose and the poetry of musical sound. And what may be called the multiplicity of effect of the orchestra has been continually developing down to the present day. Wyzewa, in his monumental work on Mozart, has brought out in a most interesting manner the composer's

gradually developing perception, in his youthful period of composition, of the special functions of the wind instruments employed in the small orchestra of his day. In his mature works Mozart shows the most refined sense of the best capabilities of each instrument, though both he and Beethoven continued to use the trumpets rather as filling-up sounds than for special effect. But apart from that, the Adagio of Beethoven's Fourth Symphony, for example, is quite an object-lesson (still for rather a small orchestra) in the characteristic employment of instruments in a musical design which is distributed among them: in the effective figure-passages for the strings, especially the highly characteristic *staccato* passage leading up to the entry of the second subject, with its sustained melody played by the clarinet and accompanied by the harp-like arpeggios of the strings; in the heavy tramp of the basses



forming a moving foundation beneath the undulating passages for the strings and the long holding notes of the wind instruments; in the little contribution which the bassoon makes on its own account at one point; in the resumption of the principal subject by the high notes of the flute, led up to by a little scale passage of its own; while even the kettledrums have their characteristic bit of solo just before the close of the composition. Anyone who can read music, and who would have the disposition of the score explained to him in advance, and follow it with his eye during the performance, would learn from that one example a great deal about the proper use and disposition of instruments in an orchestra.

Compared with modern practice, however, this is a very small orchestra, though it is what Beethoven usually found sufficient for his requirements. Flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, trum-

pets, horns, kettledrums, each in pairs,[1] and the string quartet, is his usual complement. In the finales of the Fifth, Sixth, and Ninth symphonies there are trombones and a piccolo flute, and in the latter the contra-fagotto (double-bassoon) and the triangle make their solitary and not very fortunate appearance; in the Eroica Symphony he uses three horns, and in the Ninth four. But with these exceptions his normal orchestra is as given above. And it must be observed that in the Adagio of the Fourth Symphony, just described, the whole treatment of the several instruments is, as one may say, in outline; he is concerning himself not with broad masses of effect, but with giving to each instrument the kind of detail best suited to its character and capabilities. And we still find the same kind of outline treatment in most of Debussy's "Petite Suite" for orchestra, written before he had

[1] It is odd that in the Fourth Symphony, contrary to his usual practice, he employs only one flute. Some special circumstance may have led to this.

fully arrived at his Debussification ; *ex. gr.*, the employment of the harp in characteristic arpeggio passages, and in the Minuet the admirably characteristic writing for clarinet, cor anglais, and bassoon, in passages of varied design. But in his later orchestral piece, "De l'Aube à Midi sur le Mer," the instruments are as follows :

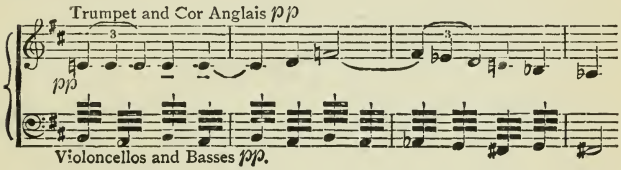
2 Large flutes	1 Tuba
1 Petite flute	3 Kettledrums
2 Oboes	Cymbals
1 Cor Anglais	Tamtam (gong)
2 Clarinets	First violins
3 Bassoons	Second violins
4 Chromatic horns	Violas
3 Trumpets	Violoncellos
2 Trombones	Basses

Sixteen violoncellos are required, which towards the close of the composition are divided so as to play in four parts. It is evident that in this kind of composition detail of outline must be very much lost, and in this and so much other recent orchestral music what is aimed at is musical tone-colouring rather than melodic outline. This kind of effect of tone-colouring

has an artistic value of its own, and is a new element in instrumental music, though it may be questioned whether, in music any more than in painting, colour apart from clearly-designed form can have a permanent interest. What is certain is, that it is a much easier problem for the composer. The creation of expressive melodic form is a matter of pure invention, of inspiration ; the development of tone-colour is a matter of contrivance, depending on the control of a great number and variety of instruments. Mozart's orchestral compositions, and by far the larger part of Beethoven's, can be stripped to the level of a pianoforte duet and still retain their essential beauty and significance. Tone-colour poems cannot stand such a test ; they are largely dependent on the mechanism of tone-production. But that is, after all, the most crucial test of power and originality in musical composition. Can the music be reduced to the simplest means of production and still

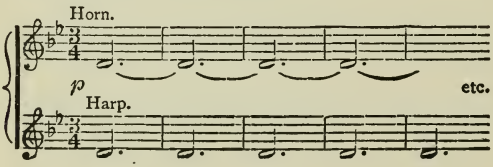
remain interesting and expressive? If not, then it is obviously partly dependent on mechanism and not on its inherent idea.

In tone-colour music the difference of *timbre* in the different classes of instruments (see page 109) assumes a new importance, as it renders some combinations of sound possible (or passable) which would not be so otherwise. Take this, for instance, from "De l'Aube à Midi sur le Mer":



Though Debussy has thrown overboard all the precept and practice of the classical school in regard to harmony and progression of parts, even he would hardly have ventured on that passage with the bass played by the hard and definite tones of a wind instrument of the same class as those which play the upper melody; the effect would have been intolerably harsh. But

the low *tremolo* of the stringed instruments is so shadowy and indefinite in effect, and belongs so entirely to another world of tone, that the harshness of the combination is not felt in the same way; and this reasoning applies to a great deal that is done in modern orchestral music—the question of *timbre* has assumed a new importance. The use of the trumpet *pianissimo* is an example of the expressive effect that may be gained by using an instrument in a manner different from conventional practice. The trumpet has been commonly treated as an instrument for loud and brilliant effect, but its lower notes, sounded softly, are very expressive in quite a different manner. In a similar spirit Saint-Saëns, at the opening of his "Danse Macabre," uses the harp in a quite abnormal manner:



nothing being heard for many bars but the holding note of the horn and the punctuations of the harp. Those repeated slow notes are absolutely contrary to the natural character of the harp, but for that very reason they produce on the hearer the *bizarre* effect which the composer aimed at.[1]

Such are the materials and the methods of utterance, so far as they can be summarised within the limits of a short treatise, whereby this most ethereal of all the arts speaks to our intellect and our emotions, conjures up within us moods of joy, of hope, of passion, of sorrow, of "the tears of mortal things," at the will of the great masters of music, the magicians who wield the wand. Most ethereal of all the arts, since it deals in creations invisible, impalpable, gone as soon as uttered; air-built structures governed by physical law, yet in their essence metaphysical; symbols of something which is behind the veil of matter,

[1] Saint-Saëns must not, however, be regarded as one of the composers who depend on tone-colouring. His music is full of noble and vigorous melodic form and invention.

that "living visible garment of God." And ethereal as it is, it is an art which seems to be more closely interwoven than any other with our own life, to pulsate with the pulsation of our hearts, to express or to tell something of our spiritual life which cannot be expressed or told "in matter-moulded forms of speech," so that we are tempted to exclaim, in the words of Rossetti quoted on the title-page, "What is this that knows the road I came?"; a quotation purposely put last of my three title-page quotations, because it is to that we eventually come with instrumental music. Its forms and structure we may analyse intellectually, but after all this is done we still come round in the end to feelings which cannot be analysed, to the conviction expressed in the exclamation of a French lady in reference to a passage in one of Beethoven's symphonies: "J'ai tant passé par là." It is this conception of instrumental music as an abstract symbolism which it is so important to maintain,

and which is liable to be very much weakened and depreciated by the present craze for Opera, a form of quasi-musical entertainment which appeals as much to the senses as to the intellect. The public of the present day—those who can afford it at all events—run after Opera more than anything else, and after Wagner's operas by preference. On philanthropic grounds we may be glad that so many people should have an enjoyment which is at all events innocent, if not very intellectual. But the fact remains, that to use music for the illustration of a number of physical facts or fancies, set forth by means of stage machinery, is to materialise the art, to drag it down from its metaphysical heights to play its part in a kind of glorified pantomime. It will possibly take a quarter of a century for the world to discover, as it certainly will in the end, that in spite of Wagner's great powers in certain directions —in the matter of orchestral colouring especially—his main influence has been to

vulgarise and materialise the art of music, and to make of it an appeal to the senses rather than to the intellect and the imagination. I shall probably not live to see this recognised, but I am perfectly certain that it will be, and that people who take an intellectual view of music will look back upon this period of Wagner-worship as a phase of musical fatuity.[1]

The main point that I wish to insist on, however, is that abstract instrumental music, which constitutes a poetic symbolism of ideas and feelings, is a higher and more intellectual form of art than Opera. It is partly for this very reason that Beethoven's one opera, though it contains some most beautiful music, is hardly a great success as an opera. His lofty genius moved in ampler regions than that which is lighted by the footlights and diversified by trap-doors and scenery in two dimensions; and it is significant of his attitude towards his art that his latest productions in instrumental

[1] See Appendix.

music, some of which are obscure and puzzling in their conception and structure, are so just because they represent, almost avowedly, an effort after some ideal beauty beyond what had before been created in musical form. Whether he found, or could have found, the realisation of this loftier ideal in any possible or intelligible musical form, it was what he was feeling after, and at all events he carried the poetry of symbolism in abstract music higher than it had ever been carried before, and in a spirit which renders many of the more recent productions of programme music miserably commonplace and prosaic in comparison.

What is to be the future of this wondrous art of instrumental music we know not; whether yet higher developments await it, or whether, as suggested above, it has reached its climax and is now on the decline. But it is to be feared that the latter is the more probable conclusion. The importance attached, for instance, to such a

composition as Strauss's "Also sprach Zarathrusta" shows a very unhealthy state of feeling in regard to instrumental music. An attempt to illustrate by music points in a philosophical scheme of life, in which each *motif* has to be labelled with its quotation to show what is its meaning, is *ipso facto* an admission that the music is a failure, as music, and that the composer has gone beyond the proper limits of his art. These and such-like other experiments in making music represent, or pretend to represent, definite literary ideas, may have a certain interest of their own, but they are the offspring of cleverness rather than genius. Possibly, if we cannot have genius, cleverness is the next best thing; but it is not the same thing. And it may be doubted whether any higher qualities than cleverness and culture are exhibited in Debussy's tone-poems, though they come more within the proper field of music; they give the impression of being calculated and contrived effects rather than

inspiration. Debussy's latest contribution to music, the "Twelve Preludes" for pianoforte, contains one piece, the study in thirds ("Les Tierces Alternées"), which in the hands of an accomplished executant should be an effective show-piece in true pianoforte style. The remainder of these Preludes, with their odd and sometimes grotesque titles, though they contain (as in "Feux d'Artifice") some brilliant bits of legitimate keyboard effect, are in many places unplayable except by keeping the pedal down almost continuously; and whatever may be thought of the musical ideas which they embody, this kind of thing is unquestionably very bad pianoforte writing.

The substitution, again (already referred to), of what may be called melodic contrivance for real melodic inspiration, is painfully evident in much of the new instrumental music produced. In the thematic quotations given in annotated programmes we rarely find a theme which

impresses us as a spontaneous expression of melodic feeling; we find themes which produce the impression of being a patchwork of notes consciously strung together to make a melodic design on which to base the structure. Melodic inspiration cannot be compelled—like the spirit, "it bloweth where it listeth"; but if it is not there it is not, and no self-conscious contrivance will atone for its absence. In regard to musical structure and instrumentation the younger school of English musicians of to-day have nothing to learn from any other school or country; the question rather is whether they do not know too much, and are not more concerned with ingenuity of structure than with the beauty of the final result. Then there is the frequent mistake of undue length, want of concentration and proportion. Composers will not be heard, permanently at all events, for their much speaking. What Millet said about painting, that whatever did not conduce to the total

effect was a positive injury to it, is equally true of music and poetry. Rubinstein's portentous "Ocean" symphony, which used to be solemnly presented to audiences at classical concerts, is now dead and buried. Sir E. Elgar's First Symphony, a work of a far higher order than anything that Rubinstein could have conceived, though it contains passages of the highest beauty and rises to something like sublimity at the close, and though it was hailed in programme books in language which would have been somewhat exuberant even if applied to Beethoven, seems already to have lost its first hold on the public; and if so, the reason is to be found in its diffuseness and want of concentration; if it were one-third shorter it would be a far more effective work. Carlyle once grimly suggested that there would be an improvement in literary style if articles were paid for, not in proportion to their length but in proportion to their brevity. Perhaps the same

reasoning might be applied to instrumental music.

But whatever be the future of the art, enough is already stored up in the archives of instrumental music to fill our days with delight; that at least is our heritage, and no eccentricities of modern music can deprive us of it, so long as we have ear and heart to bring to the outpourings of

> "Those instruments with which high spirits call
> The Future from its cradle, and the Past
> Out of its grave, and make the Present last
> In thoughts and joys that sleep, but cannot die,
> Folded within their own eternity."

APPENDIX

Note to Page 144.—Considering the exaggerated popularity of Wagner's operas at present, and the amount of exuberant rhetoric poured out over them by the musical critics of the day, the reader will perhaps ask whether a writer who dissents from all this can possibly be in the right, and whether the common consensus of opinion in the musical press can safely be set aside. I can offer them some presumption in the opposite direction, as the result of my own experience. It has been my fortune, in several instances, to hold and to express opinions on musical subjects entirely at variance with those generally held at the time, and in each case I have lived to find the world come round to my opinion. The two most important instances were in connection with Mendelssohn and Liszt. There was a time when Mendelssohn's music was the object of the same indiscriminate popular worship as that which is now bestowed on Wagner. The younger musical generation of the present day may find difficulty in believing this; but it is the fact. When his posthumous "Reformation Symphony," a work

by no means of his best, was produced for the first time at the Crystal Palace, all musical London streamed out to hear it. The author of a clever musical novel, *Charles Auchester*, represented Mendelssohn, under a feigned name, as the great pioneer of modern music, the inspired prophet who was to raise the art to a higher level than it had ever attained before. He was referred to, in a musical journal of the period, as a composer "who seemed to possess the genius of Bach and Beethoven rolled into one." I was never taken in by this popular movement; I enjoyed Mendelssohn's music then, I enjoy it now, but I always maintained that he was greatly over-rated, and that he was a composer who, though he had, in Byron's phrase, "the fatal gift of beauty," was deficient in structural power. How far the pendulum has swung back it is hardly necessary to point out; and I find myself now defending Mendelssohn against a depreciation as unjust and exaggerated as the idolatry once lavished upon him. Take again the case of Liszt. A good many years ago there was a determined effort to make out Liszt to be a great composer; Liszt concerts were industriously given with this object, and Liszt's compositions were written up by the musical critics. In an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, published just thirty years ago, I find that I wrote: "We do not decline still to hold a suspended opinion in regard to Liszt's place as a

composer ; but we entertain the strong conviction that when weighed in the inexorable balances of time he will be found wanting, and that the idea that he is a great and important contributor to the world's possessions in musical creation will prove to be a delusion." Here, again, the wheel has come full circle. At the present moment, I hardly ever read a notice of a concert in which any composition of Liszt's has been included, without seeing a half-contemptuous reference to it as superficial and tawdry music, which could well have been spared from the programme. It has taken them a quarter of a century to find this out. It will take them another quarter of a century to find the real place for Wagner. The latter is of course a much more important figure than Liszt ; he has left his mark indelibly on the art of instrumentation and on the æsthetic of Opera ; but he is not what people now think him ; and the persistent institution of "Wagner concerts," where audiences crowd to hear, in a concert-room, a series of excerpts avowedly written for stage effect and to accompany and illustrate stage action, merely because it is "Wagner," is one of the greatest absurdities of the day.

And when one reads in newspapers references to *Die Meistersinger* as "the greatest example of humorous opera in existence," one can only conclude that these critics have not the slightest

conception of what humour means. Wagner had not an ounce of humour in his composition; he had a strong perception of the grotesque, which is often mistaken for a sense of humour, but is a totally different quality. Humour is one of the most difficult things to define; it is a quality rather to be felt than defined; but there is no doubt that one prime ingredient in it is a sense of proportion, of which Wagner was totally destitute. His so-called humour in *Die Meistersinger* is entirely distorted by solemn and disproportionate exaggeration. There is more real humour in the first Finale to Mozart's *Figaro* than Wagner could even have understood. And as to the literary merit of his librettos, which have received such absurd adulation, I may quote here the judgment of my old friend, Mr. Henry Reeve, for so many years the Editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, who, though he did not know much about music, was intimately familiar with German language and literature:

"The *libretto* of an opera has seldom much claim to literary merit; but of all the doggerel we ever met with 'to be said or sung' on the stage, Herr Wagner's verses appear to us to be the worst. Childish jingle and tasteless alliteration take the place of rhythm and poetry; and whatever he may have done with the art of Mozart and Beethoven, he has certainly prostituted the language of Schiller and Goethe. But it would be cruel to judge such trash by any known literary standard."

Mr. Reeve's comment referred specially to the words of *Tristan und Isolde*. The fact that this kind of stuff is regarded by Wagner's admirers as sublime poetry, affords a somewhat crucial indication of their general standard of mental education.

Those who are dazzled by the spectacle of the popular triumph of Wagner's operas might do well to consider the results of a somewhat analogous case in connection with another branch of art. Bernini, in the seventeenth century, was in the world of art in a somewhat similar position to that occupied by Wagner in the musical world two centuries later. He was the great man of his day, and had some resemblance to Wagner in his abnormal personal vanity and egotism. When Bernini went to Paris on the invitation of Louis XIV, his journey was like a kind of royal progress; the authorities of the cities through which he passed turned out in official state to welcome him. And if any more far-sighted spectator had prophesied that the time would come when a single work of Donatello's would stand for more in the world of art than all the sculptural bombast of Bernini, he would have been laughed at. But he would have been right, nevertheless.

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